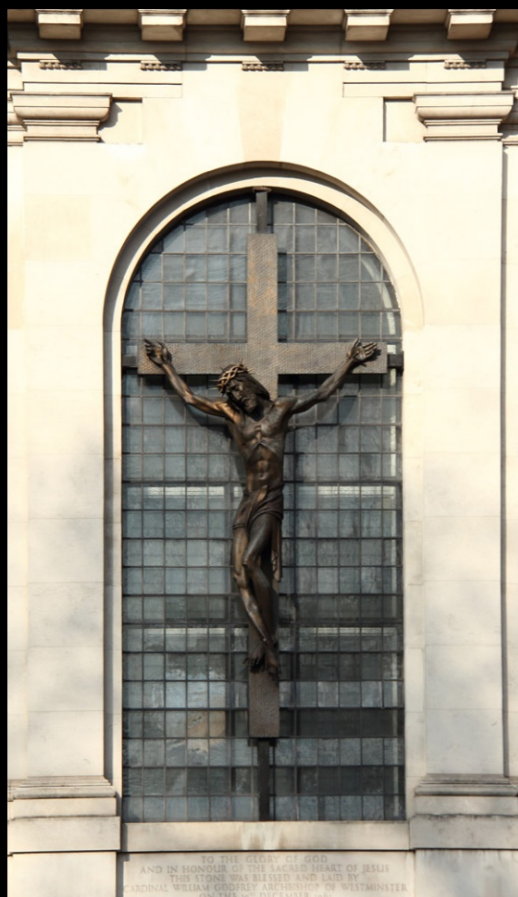


In the Brave Days of Old



by Dom Bede Camm, OSB

Dedication

To Ushaw

Mother of many martyrs, thronèd now
In queenly state beside the northern yews,
Yet not; methinks, less royal when thy brow
Bled thorn-crowned, and the purple passion hues
Stained deep thy vesture - Lo! thy sons in mirth
Reap harvest-fields their elder brothers sowed
In tears, nay in their life-blood. May their birth
Urge them to deeds of fame: the fire that glowed
In Allen's princely heart burn still in thee
And thine - the proof of noblest ancestry!

Preface

The historical sketches of which this little volume is composed have been gathered almost exclusively from records contemporary with the events they describe. It will be seen that they are principally concerned with the Elizabethan persecution as it affected the young, and Church students in particular.

My aim has chiefly been to interest the rising generation of Catholics in the terrible sufferings which their forefathers bravely endured in order to hand down the faith to them intact. It seems to me that they would value that holy faith even more dearly did they realize at how great a prize it has been preserved.

A devotion to our English martyrs can but fire us with something of that burning zeal for England's conversion which nerved those heroic men to brave the rack and the gibbet, and which inspired mere boys and girls to suffer no small trials and face no light dangers sooner than renounce the faith of their fathers.

But I hope that these sketches will not be without interest for older Catholics also. Their principal merit is their fidelity to the original authorities on which they are based. I have refrained from embroidering the facts with imaginary details, which though they might possibly add colour and life to the narratives, would do so at the cost of fidelity to historical accuracy.

The first two sketches have already appeared in the *Month* (although the opening one has received considerable additions), and the story of the Worthington boys came out some years ago in *Faith of our Fathers*. I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy of the editors in allowing me to reprint these papers.

The two opening sketches, as well as the sixth, are mainly based on D. Diego de Yepes' precious *Historia particular de la persecucion de Inglaterra*, but for the second I have used other sources, sufficiently indicated in the course of the narrative, and for the sixth two documents printed from the Stonyhurst manuscripts by Father John Pollen, S.J., in his *Acts of the English Martyrs*.

The third and last are from the manuscript annals of the English College of Valladolid now preserved at Ushaw College, and the story of the *Vulnerata* is mainly taken from the same chronicle. The fourth and fifth are from Dr Bridgewater's *Concertatio Ecclesie Catholicae in Anglia*, and the seventh from various sources, but principally from Father Weston's autobiography published by the late Father John Morris, S.J., and Brother Foley's *Records of the English Province, S.J.*

I have to thank his Lordship the President of Saint Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, for permission to use the Valladolid manuscript, and the Reverend Michael Burns for the photograph of the *Vulnerata* which forms the frontispiece.

And so I leave this little work to tell its own tale, with the prayer that it may help a little in that great cause which we have all so deeply at heart, the conversion of our country to the Catholic Faith.

- *Saint Thomas' Abbey*
- *Erdington*
- *Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*
- *29 June 1899*

An Escape from Bridewell

Good Bishop Diego Yepes, the Hieronymite friar, who was confessor to King Philip II of Spain, had, as all the world knows, a great love and compassion for our persecuted forefathers. He was never weary of enlisting the sympathies of his royal penitent on behalf of the exiled English Catholics, and to his efforts we may undoubtedly ascribe much of the success which attended Father Persons and Father Creswell in their attempts to found seminaries for English Church students in the Spanish dominions.

When the college of Saint Alban at Valladolid was, after some difficulties and trials, at last firmly established, the kind-hearted bishop of Tarazona could not do too much to show his interest in the work. As Valladolid was Philip's birthplace, the king was fond of holding his court there, and so the bishop got ample opportunity of seeing for himself the progress of a work in which he was so greatly interested. On the feast of the Finding of the Relics of Saint Stephen, August 3, 1592, he brought the king to visit the college. He has himself described this visit in his work on the *Persecution in England*, with great detail and with evident satisfaction.

Readers of my *Life of the Venerable John Roberts* will perhaps recall the account I have there given of the manner of life led at this English seminary. It will suffice for the present to say that the students of Saint Alban's led what we should now-a-days consider a life of monastic strictness, and that the hours of study and prayer left little space, less perhaps than was wise, for recreation. However, Thursday in each week was then as now kept as a whole holiday, and the students usually spent this day at their vineyard outside the city, where they would amuse themselves as English lads have been ever wont to do.

Sometimes good Bishop Yepes would visit them on these recreation-days, and, collecting a little group around him, would make them recount to him their adventures, the manifold perils through which they had to pass before they had arrived at the peaceful haven of Saint Alban's. It must have made a charming picture, this old Spanish bishop with his young English friends around him, listening

so intently to the strange exciting tales these boys had to tell in their broken Spanish, encouraging them no doubt with smiles and questions, blessing them affectionately when they had finished, and perhaps repaying them by recounting some little anecdote of the seraphic virgin Saint Teresa, whose biography he had written. And then when he went home the old man would write down the accounts he had heard, and very likely give his Narrative to the students or to their superiors to be corrected, so that no mistakes should be made, and the hard unpronounceable English names should not be wrongly spelt.

The bishop's labours were not in vain. Still in his pages we may read the thrilling stories which those fair-haired lads told him among the vineyards of Valladolid, and still we may ourselves be encouraged and consoled by the history of all our fathers had to suffer to maintain that priceless heritage which they have handed down to us - the faith of the one Church, holy, Catholic, apostolic and Roman.

I propose to tell one or two of the stories which Don Diego de Yepes has preserved for us. Truth is stranger than fiction, and it would certainly try one's imagination had one to invent an adventure more striking, with details more picturesque, than this one with which we will begin.

There were then four English Catholic lads who, under the charge of a faithful guardian named Bartholomew Wickham, set out one day in the year 1593 for the distant Spanish college. Two of these lads were nephews of that famous confessor of the faith Thomas Pounce of Belmont, whose glorious constancy during a long and painful imprisonment of over thirty years make him one of the illustrious ornaments of the society of Jesus, to which he was admitted in prison.

Their names were Henry Pounce, aged sixteen, and his brother William, who was only eleven. Their grandmother, the confessor's mother, was sister to Thomas, earl of Southampton, so that the lads had noble blood in their veins. We learn from a letter of their uncle that their parents were Protestants, but he had brought them up himself and educated them as Catholics as though they were his own sons; and he made them his heirs when he was admitted to the

society of Jesus.

The party settled to go to Spain by Ireland, as it was easier and safer to embark from thence than from one of the English seaports.

But when they got to Ireland they did not find it so easy to get a ship as they had hoped. In fact they wasted a whole year in looking out for an opportunity of making a safe passage, and meanwhile of course they spent most of their money. But these unexpected mishaps did not make them lose courage or give up their plan. It was therefore determined that their tutor should return to England for more money while they remained alone in Ireland. However, just as he had started, he met with five other English lads who had come to Ireland with the same determination of passing over to Spain, and so he changed - his mind and returned with them to the others. They were much consoled at this, and encouraged each other, and especially when they found that the new-comers had brought sufficient money with them to defray the expenses of the whole party.

And so, as they had a common purse, they chose Wickham captain and guide of their little band, and made a bargain with a Dublin merchant to carry them over to Spain in his ship. After the bargain was struck and the money paid down, they naturally expected the merchant to behave with the same sincerity and honour as themselves, but they were woefully deceived. The fellow first of all craftily got them to give him two hundred ducats more than his price, on the pretext that he needed it to buy corn, and then made no attempt to hurry on the departure, but on the contrary put every sort of obstacle in the way. Seeing this they asked for their money back, whereupon the rogue threatened to denounce them to the government if they mentioned the subject again.

Thus deceived and mocked by this merchant they turned for help to a French captain of La Rochelle, who was at the time in Dublin, and agreed with him for a passage over to France, hoping easily to get from there to Spain. But boys find it hard to keep a secret, and their guardian was somewhat carried away, it would seem, by their youthful fervour, and the result was that their plans leaked out to their exceeding discomfort, for they soon found themselves in the hands of the viceroy's constables instead of on board their French

ship.

However, if they were too young to keep a secret, they were not so young that they could not defend their faith before their Protestant captors. Like the Arians of old, these heretics chiefly desired to get them to attend their services. But to the question, "would they go to church?" our lads replied with a flat and decided negative.

As to their seeking to leave their country they confessed, with all sincerity, that it was in order to escape the penalties inflicted by the queen's new laws on all who held to the old religion, and appealed with much effect to a recent statute which ordered that all Catholics who had been three months in prison, and would not deny their faith or attend the heretical services should be forced to leave the country after taking an oath that they would never return, and that if they did return they should die on the gibbet as felons. So after all, what had they done but try to forestall the execution of this law? The judges who examined them could not help admiring the prudence as well as the sincerity which characterized their replies, especially considering how young they were; they even admitted that they had acted in the matter with considerable forethought. However, as evening was then drawing on, they sent them as prisoners to Dublin Castle. But before they left, the Protestant bishop of Meath, who was one of the council, asked leave of his colleagues to take the little boy, William Pounce, to his own house, instead of sending him to the castle, as he was sorry that boys so young and of such noble blood should be put in a common prison. The request having been granted, he asked the child, "Will you come and stay in my house and enjoy yourself, and go to church and to school with my own son who is about your age!" But the boy replied with great disdain _ that he would do nothing of the sort, but would go to prison with his brother, and when the prelate insisted, the poor boy began to cry, and say that he wanted to go to prison with his brother. Then the bishop seeing how much the separation would grieve the lad, said that both should go and have a happy time together at his house, and turning to Henry made him the same offer. But he replied, "No, my lord, I have already determined to go to prison with my companions; for I prefer to lose your lordship's favour than my faith and religion." So the lords of the council, seeing the firm resolution of these young heroes, sent

them all to the castle. As to Bartholomew, they suspected that he must be some notable Catholic as he had trained the lads to such a pitch of firmness and constancy, and so they turned their attention particularly to him, and among other pleasing attentions, stripped him to the shirt, and pierced his clothes all over with needles to find out if he were concealing any papers, *Agnus Dei*, blessed beads, or other prohibited objects, in order that they might thus be able to make an accusation against him.

After two or three days they were each examined separately, lest they should encourage each other by their replies. However, the result did not give much satisfaction to their captors. And now the viceroy himself intervened. He had been away when they were taken and had not yet seen them, so he rode one morning up to the castle and ordered the governor to bring the younger prisoners before him. When they were produced, he asked why they were not in chains. The governor replied that no irons could be found that were small enough. He at once ordered that some should be found for their feet, and iron rings to put round their necks, and added, "They believe that the pope has power to set them free when he wants to." To which one of the boys replied, "No, my lord, we don't believe that the pope can take our fetters off when he chooses; but we do believe that if your lordship puts them on, God can take them off if it should please Him, for The Lord looseth those that are in bonds."

This reply silenced the viceroy, and he soon turned his horse and rode off with his company. The boys were taken back to prison, where they received a visit from the viceroy's brother, who gave one of them five *reals*.

Another time one of them named Henry Kirkham, a lad of eighteen, was examined before the bishop of Meath and the lords of the council, and asked, among other things, what had made him leave England. He replied, "The persecution." "There is no persecution in England," answered they, "for loyal subjects of the queen." "Marry but there is," said the youth, "a most cruel and inhuman one." "What, you rogue," cried a councillor, "does our queen treat you others like the Papists treated those of our religion in the time of queen Mary, sending them to the executioner to be burnt with

faggots on their backs?" To this cunning question the lad replied with zeal and courage: "The queen would have no reason for treating us in such a way, for we are not heretics like your people were." "I will prove to you that you are a heretic," retorted the examiner. "No, Sir," said the youth, "your lordship will never prove that I am a heretic, but please God you be not found to be one yourself."

The councillor in confusion turned the conversation by making mock of the lad and telling him he would command the gaoler to throw him into a secret dungeon, where he would be held a close prisoner and would have no one to speak to, and he would see that he had a pair of good heavy irons to wear.

This cruel command was carried out to the letter by the gaoler; and thus the poor boy was kept a close prisoner in chains for two months and a half, until the whole party was sent over to England.

Bartholomew Wickham, their leader, was naturally treated more severely than the rest. He was most vigorously examined by the viceroy himself, who got so enraged at his refusing to answer some of his questions that he abused him roundly as "a son of the devil," and said that it was certain that he had made a compact with the enemy of souls. His constancy in fact so enraged the viceroy that he had him thrown into a dungeon with heavy irons on his legs and an iron collar of five pounds' weight round his neck. Though the weight of these irons nearly crushed him, he was attached by yet other chains to a pillar in the prison, and there made to stand upright and motionless for more than seventy days.

Just at this time there arrived in Ireland a boy sent by Thomas Pounce, to whom he had been page. This lad, who was sixteen years old, hearing on his arrival at Dublin that his old master's nephews were there in prison, went to visit them, and was arrested by the gaoler. He also was taken before the viceroy and was committed a close prisoner, so that this brought the number of the little band up to eleven.

So these poor boys were there in Dublin Castle, without money, for all they had with them had been stolen, without friends, without even the necessities of life. But God who fed His people in the

wilderness did not desert His young servants in their extremity. He put it into the hearts of the Catholics of Dublin to supply them with all they needed: clothes, food and other necessities, and these warm-hearted Irish people, not content with sending them their welcome gifts, came constantly to see them. Men and women, rich and poor, of every rank and calling, crowded in fact to the prison from all the neighbourhood round, and did their best to encourage and support the young confessors of Christ, whose constancy was a source of the greatest edification to all. Among other visitors was one Thomas Lecky, a lettered man and a good Catholic, who was at that time in the employ of the chancellor of Ireland; this good man was allowed by the gaoler to enter the prison freely, since he knew him to be a dependant of the chancellor's, and had no idea that he was a Catholic. Little did he guess that he came to confirm his prisoners in their good resolves, and to encourage them to suffer persecution joyfully for the sake of Christ, in the hope of the reward that God surely promises to all those who suffer for the faith. Not content with thus encouraging them, good Mr Lecky also gave the boys frequent and generous alms.

He also wrote petitions for them to the viceroy and council, filled with such excellent arguments and reasonings, that they were sometimes moved to compassion for the lads, although they were exceedingly angry with them; and when he heard that they were to be sent to England he took care that they were provided with abundant provisions, and that they were treated with kindness.

It appears that Mr Lecky's charity was rewarded by God with a great grace, even with a vocation to the priesthood; for shortly after the lads had been sent to England, he made up his mind to leave his master and go to the college at Valladolid. Here he was not long in finishing his studies, for he was already a learned man and a graduate of an English university, so that he was soon ordained priest and sent back to labour in the Lord's vineyard, which he did with great success.

When the lads had been more than ten weeks in prison, the English Privy Council sent for them to London, strictly charging the viceroy to send them with great precautions lest any of them should escape by the way; for, they said, it was most necessary to carefully

exterminate that brood of traitors who were more dangerous to the state than all its other enemies, since these could only wage war against the outward defences, and the bodies of the queen's subjects, while the popish traitors from within made secret conquest of their minds and hearts, and reduced them to the Roman faith, which would destroy the religion founded by the queen did they not see to it. So these most dangerous young traitors were shipped off to England with all sorts of exaggerated precautions.

The elder boys were chained together two and two, and in this style they left the castle, with Bartholomew, their leader, at their head. And he, with a face beaming with joy, held up on high the heavy iron chains he wore round his neck, crying out to his companions, "Follow me, cheerfully, in the wake of this cross which they have laid on me, which I bear as a standard before you. Let us not turn backward till we have gained the victory and come into the presence of our Lord for whose love we go charged with this weight of iron. In England also combats await us, and conflicts far more terrible than those we have - here passed through; but have no fear, He who has placed us in this warfare will also bring us out of it triumphantly."

Before he had finished this speech they were hurriedly commanded to go on; and thus he led them, alert and joyous, in spite of the fetters that weighed him down, through the streets of Dublin to the port where they were to embark. The sight of the brave little band made such an impression on the good people of Dublin, Protestants as well as Catholics, that it was very long before the sorrow and compassion they excited died out in their hearts.

They were embarked on a ship belonging to a kind and honourable man who treated them with consideration and took off their chains. Thus they were brought safely to Chester, and there delivered to the mayor of that city, who told them that he had received orders from the council to detain them there till further notice; and he insisted on their giving bail that they would not attempt to escape, otherwise they would have to be put in irons as before. They replied that they had no acquaintance in Chester except the captain of the ship which had brought them from Ireland. However, this good man had been so impressed by their virtue that he offered to

stand bail for them all. With this security from the captain they were put in prison without fetters or irons. Nevertheless, they had much to suffer, for they were nearly starved to death. They had no friends in Chester, and the number of Catholics in that place being but small (even those that were Catholics not daring to help them lest they should be known as such), they had no assistance and received no alms. The heretics showed no pity for them, and the Catholics dared not do so. The poor boys not being used to such severe fasting, felt the privation greatly, especially as it lasted for some considerable time. At last one day they saw the mayor passing by the prison and ventured to entreat him, for the sake of charity and the Christian name, to have pity on them and not let them perish of hunger. The mayor replied harshly, "Why should I relieve traitors? You were given to me to guard, not to feed." The lads replied that they were not traitors, but that they professed the same religion which their fathers and ancestors had held, but he retorted that they were traitors, and that if he had leave from the council he would hang them like dogs, one against the other; and with this he returned to his house full of venom and anger.

Fortunately, however, they were succoured in these dire straits by the charity of a Catholic gentleman, himself a prisoner for conscience' sake. This good man, whose name was Whitemore, had passed no less than twenty years in prison; but his own sufferings had only made him feel the more for those of others, and he made every effort to save his young fellow-captives from starving. Hunger and cold, and all the miseries of an Elizabethan dungeon, did not daunt the spirit of our young heroes; on the contrary, their sufferings only made them the more constant. So it was decided to send them to London, that they might be dealt with by the council. While being led to the final interview with the mayor of Chester, they formed into a little procession in the street, and sang the *Nunc dimittis* in Latin, Bartholomew, their tutor, intoning. The mayor was very angry at this, and sharply rebuked them, but it was to no effect. For no sooner did they start on their journey to London, than they again formed in procession, walking two and two, and Bartholomew intoned the Litany of the Saints, to which they all responded with so much sweetness that even their guards were touched and allowed them to continue. And so the little band threaded the narrow old-world streets of Chester, and those sweet

invocations to Mary and the saints, which had not been heard since the Benedictines of Saint Werburgh's made their solemn processions through the town, once more resounded in the streets. People crowded out from their houses to see the novel sight, and many followed them for a quarter of a mile outside the gates of the city.

It was thus they began their weary journey along the old Roman road to London; and on their way must have passed close to the site of the monastery in which I am now writing, as well as that of Oscott College, where so many of their successors now prepare in peace and quietness for the sacred ministry. When they arrived at Lichfield, they were so exhausted and worn out that they could walk no more, and the guards were obliged to provide them with horses. Here a sad event happened. A messenger came to meet them from their parents, bringing them money and other necessities. But the cruel soldiers robbed the poor man and threw him into gaol, where he was most cruelly ill-treated. The boys were only able to extract two *reals* from the magistrates, all the rest was lost to them.

Whenever our little band of confessors entered a town, they always sang the litanies in procession, as they had done in Chester. The people had, alas! quite forgotten these strains, once so familiar to them. Long years of heresy (in which, indeed, a new generation had grown up) had obliterated the memory of the old faith and its practices, and all that they remembered were the names of Matins, Mass, and Evensong; and so, when they saw the boys chanting the litanies, they used to say that they were singing Mass or Evensong or Matins, according to the time of day. This is, indeed, a striking illustration of the quickness with which a people can lose even the memory of its past religion.

When they reached London they were examined by Cecil himself, and Bartholomew Wickham was separated from them and put in Saint Catherine's prison by the Tower, for the old religious houses had given place to prisons where Catholics were confined in great numbers. The boys were thrown into Bridewell, once reserved only for the lowest criminals.

After two or three days in this loathsome place, three of the boys were separated from their companions and examined by the infamous Topcliffe. From such a monster they could expect, of

course, no mercy. Henry Pounce was the first to be examined; it was hoped, no doubt, to get from him some evidence against his holy uncle. He steadily refused to go to church, being, as we shall see, a boy of great courage and constancy. If he would only have agreed to go once to the heretical service, he would have been immediately released and loaded with caresses. He was frightfully abused by Topcliffe, so much so that the other magistrates interposed and tried to appease the rage of this horrible old Made ut he only cried out: "Let me: be, sirs; I know how to treat this sort of scum!" Being unable, however, to make anything of Henry Pounce, he sent for the other two, one of whom, named John Hall, had been twice before imprisoned in Bridewell. When Topcliffe recognized this brave lad he foamed at the mouth, saying: "Ah, it's you, is it? I promise you that if you escape the gallows this time I'll be hanged in your place."

But he could not shake either of the boys; and so all three were sent back to prison, and an attempt was made to starve them into submission, They were only given a little black bread and a pound of ox neck full of blood and very watery; and this had to suffice for sixteen people. This is the sort of food, says Yepes, this cruel man usually gives to the imprisoned priests and other Catholics.

Later on, three judges came to the prison and examined the three youngest boys on the usual subjects - where they had heard Mass, what priests they knew, etc. Poor little William Pounce was only eleven, but nevertheless he and his companions held firm. This enraged the judges so much that they determined to make an example of these three children. So they ordered the gaoler to give them every day a quantity of flax to beat, and to whip them cruelly every morning and evening that they did not finish their allotted task. No one was to be allowed to speak to them, nor were they to be permitted to write to any of their friends or fellow-prisoners. The brave little fellows were stripped of all their clothes but their shirts, and were set forthwith to their hard task. It was a very heavy toil, says the bishop, and one looked on as most ignominious, being generally reserved for slaves, They were half-starved into the bargain, so that their strength soon failed; but their spirit remained ever firm and constant, although they were cruelly flogged each time their poor little arms refused to accomplish the heavy daily

task. Once one of them was beaten so unmercifully about the head that he fell fainting on the ground; and one of the other poor boys was so tired that he could not dress himself nor raise his hand. Meantime the judges sent preachers to dispute with the boys during their work; but they begged them not to worry them, as they were quite convinced of the truth of their religion, and had not time to dispute owing to their work; for if the daily task were not finished they would be beaten. And they persisted in their refusal, although the gaoler assured them that they should not be beaten for the time spent in conference with the ministers.

At night the poor children had to sleep in a dungeon together with robbers and malefactors. This final indignity was, however, the means of their escape; for these criminals had a plan in hand for breaking out of prison. They asked our lads if they would escape, supposing the doors were opened. The boys said certainly they would, for they were in prison for no crime, but for the true faith, and were very badly treated there as well. So the malefactors set to work to force the doors by means of instruments furnished by their friends, and our little lads spent the time meanwhile in fervent prayer to our Lord, who deigned to use these wicked men as instruments to liberate His servants. So on the night of Saint Laurence (August 10) they escaped, not, however, without running great risk of detection by some of the guards. What fervent thanks did they render to God, who had thus delivered them! Of course it was necessary to part company in order to make recapture more difficult; so while two went home, one made his way to the sea-coast and managed to get over to Saint Omer. In due course he was sent to Valladolid, where Bishop Yepes made his acquaintance as we have seen.

We must now return to the others. Four of the youngest were kept in a dark and filthy dungeon in the same prison from which their companions had just escaped. This dungeon was a most doleful place for children, as may be easily imagined, and it contained neither a bed nor any other furniture. It is little wonder if at first the poor lads felt greatly depressed. But before long they plucked up their courage and set to work to sweep their cell, and clean it as far as possible. They put the filth into two heaps, and at night they had to use them for pillows, having nothing else! These heaps of

rotting straw and dirt were all the beds they had for sixteen weeks. They were fed like the others on black bread and bullock's neck, and were given no water to wash in during the whole imprisonment. Their state can be better imagined than described, However, they made shift to wash themselves in the small-beer that was given them for drink. The poor lads were frequently examined separately, and the magistrates did all in their power to brow-beat and frighten them into compliance. But all was of no avail; even the Protestant ministers who were sent to dispute with them were discomfited by these doughty little Papists.

After some time spent in this way they heard one day a noise in a certain part of the room above theirs. It was a man's voice raised in considerable agitation. They listened most attentively, and soon were overjoyed to hear that the stranger was praying aloud with great fervour, recommending himself to our Lord and the saints. He was evidently therefore a fellow-Catholic, suffering like themselves for the faith. They determined to try and communicate with him, and at last by dint of knocks and cries attracted his attention. At first, however, he answered them roughly and told them to leave him in peace, for he did not know that they were Catholics. But when he found out the true facts of the case he rejoiced greatly. He told them that he had been a fellow-captive of Father John Gerard, S.J., and that his only crime was his refusal to conform to the new religion. He was in a dungeon where he could neither stand upright nor lie down at full length, and he was being kept on half-rations. In these distressing circumstances it was a great consolation to the poor man to have the good company of our young heroes, and he soon devised a means of communicating with them more easily. This was by raising a plank in the floor: he used to lie over the place and speak through the hole. It was easily set straight before the gaoler appeared, and no suspicion was aroused in the minds of the warders.

One night they had a rather exciting experience. The lads had all gone to bed - or rather to rest on their miserable couches - when in the middle of the night they heard their new friend crying out to them in great agitation. He urgently begged them, for the love of God, to come to his aid. When they inquired what was the matter, he told them he stood in the most urgent need of their prayers.

They suspected what it was, and throwing themselves on their knees, prayed earnestly to our Lord to grant to their poor friend the grace of constancy and victory over his spiritual foes. He meanwhile recited all the prayers he knew, and when he had finished, they taught him some good words to use against the devil, *Per signum sancte crucis, de inimicis nostris libera nos, Deus noster*. This finally brought him relief, after he had repeated it over and over again. Greatly consoled by his deliverance, he gave thanks to our Lord and to his young friends; and told them his trouble. When he lay down to sleep that night the devil had appeared and attacked him in bodily form. Laying a vigorous hold on his doublet he had tried to suffocate him; and it was not till the poor man had several times cried out the Holy Name of Jesus that he was delivered from this great danger. Nevertheless, the demon remained by his side, constantly tempting and threatening him, until in his fright he had called for their aid. Our little heroes, whose sufferings had given them a wisdom beyond their years, now consoled and encouraged their friend, and after some pious conversation, proposed to return to rest. But the poor man earnestly besought them not to desert him, saying that, although he knew well that our Lord would not permit the enemy to do him harm, yet his fatigue was so great that he shrank from encountering another assault unaided.

So our brave lads determined to remain with him by turn, and while the others went to sleep, one of them mounted a great bench that ran round the cell in order to be as near as possible to the sufferer, and there he kept watch all night long. This work of charity was continued for several consecutive nights, till it pleased God to relieve His servant from this affliction.

After some time they had the consolation of seeing their friend among them, for he was removed from his narrow dungeon and brought into theirs. The gaolers left the door of the cell that he had inhabited open in order to air it, and fortunately did not notice the loose plank in the floor. As the cell remained thus open for some days, the gaolers having forgotten all about it, the man proposed to his young friends to attempt their escape by this way. This was agreed on, and preparations accordingly made. They plaited ropes of their shirts and some towels they had managed to get; and though this took some time, it pleased God, in answer to their

fervent supplications, to close the gaoler's eyes to the means of escape which lay so ready at hand.

So when the destined night had come, and all was ready, they first of all climbed, by means of the bench, up into the cell above them. The door was still open, and they easily reached the prison roof. Here they prepared for the most dangerous part of the undertaking. Their friend let himself down first in order to give them courage; but alas! before he had got far down he let go the rope and fell headlong. He had a terrible fall, and the boys heard his cries and groans from the ground below. Then all was silence. They were naturally in great dismay, and did not know what to do. But at last they plucked up their courage a little and took hold of the rope. To their joy, they found that their friend was pulling at it, which showed them that he was not killed, as they had feared.

So then the eldest, Edmund, recommended himself to our Lord, and slid down the rope. He arrived safe and sound at the bottom. The next, however, was not so fortunate. Unable to support the weight of his body by his arms he soon let go the rope, and fell to the ground as dead. Edmund held him in his arms, until at last, to his great joy, he saw him revive. The other two came down safely (the descent was over a hundred feet), but they soon found that their difficulties were as yet by no means ended. 'There were two high walls to scale before they could get into the street. Their poor friend seemed quite unconscious, and could scarcely move; they had to support him in their arms. At last, however, they managed, wonderful as it seems, to surmount all these obstacles, and to reach the street in safety. God's good angel, who had of old delivered Saint Peter from his prison, came to their aid, and before long they found themselves before a Catholic house where they hoped to gain shelter. But when they had knocked in vain for some time, they were answered from within that no Papists lived there. This gave them a fright, and they ran off in different directions. Two of them accompanied the wounded man to his house, where they left him, and at last managed to reach their own homes. Here Edmund, whom we have mentioned above as the eldest, at once began to get ready to continue his interrupted journey to the continent. So when he had provided himself with sufficient money and other necessities, he embarked at a quay on the Thames. He had to pass

on the way the very prison from which he had escaped. Fortunately, however, he was not recognized. At last he too reached Saint Omer, and in due course was sent to Valladolid, where he rejoined his old companion in misfortune.

We do not learn what happened to the other lads; but at the time Bishop Yepes wrote this account, their tutor, Bartholomew Wickham, was still in prison. He was very content with his fate, and looked upon it as ordained by God for His greater glory and Service.

I have, however, gleaned some further details about Henry Pounce. As he grew up his faith and courage did not desert him. His uncle writes of him to Father Robert Persons (June 3, 1609): "My nephew is very valorous and zealous, and his constancy well tried from his infancy." One instance of his valour is given by Father Antony Rivers, S.J.

In speaking of a certain apostate, he writes (also to Father Persons): "Bomer with his pursuivants, meeting with one Mr Henry Pounce that had been a traveller the day after the execution (of Venerable Francis Page, S.J. and Venerable Robert Walkinson, at Tyburn, April 20, 1602), would have staid him as a priest and traitor; he inquired by what name they arrested him, and what warrant they had, which they, refusing to show, he drew upon them in the streets, hurt the pursuivant in divers places, and defended himself most valorously against many 'prentices that came with halberts to help the pursuivants, and, had not his sword broken, he would have beaten the whole street before him. Having wounded and hurt many and being himself wounded and disarmed, he yielded, and was carried before the chief justice, where he testified of himself as no priest, and was therefore wronged by their manner of proceeding. Notwithstanding, for that he was a Papist and had been a traveller, he was sent to Newgate. The pursuivant is like to die, the gentleman is much pitied and highly commended for his valour by all sorts" (28 April 1602). It is not known what became of Henry Pounce; but, as Brother Foley says, he was probably soon released, as he was simply acting in self-defence.

Such is one of the adventures of Church students in the days of "Good Queen Bess."

A Jesuit in Disguise

On an early day in January in the year 1595, a party of young men might have been found in a back room of an obscure inn in the seaport town of Calais. They were six in number, and their appearance was very different from that of most of the young men who frequented the place; far from being roistering and dissipated, they seemed quiet and retiring, and in fact were evidently anxious to escape observation. Their names were John Copley, William Worthington, John Iverson, Henry Montpesson, James Thompson and Thomas Garnet. Had you possessed the gift of second sight, you might have seen the aureole of martyrdom circling the brows of the last-named lad. But the ordinary observer would only have noticed that the young men were English and Catholics, which was a combination that had become too rare in those latter days of Elizabeth. He might indeed have made a shrewd guess that they came from the Jesuit seminary of Saint Omer, not far off, and that they were about to set sail for England or for Spain. Some prying people had in fact come to that conclusion already, and the results of their researches were likely to be unpleasant for our travellers. But at present they were waiting for a favourable wind, the ship selected by the good fathers of Saint Omer being delayed beyond its time in port.

As they were discussing this unsatisfactory state of things the door of the inn was thrown open, and in marched a man of military appearance and bearing, but clad as a merchant. His dress, and still more his speech, proclaimed him to be a native of Italy, and in fact he announced himself as Ottavio Fuscinelli, a Neapolitan merchant, about to sail for Spain. Strange to say, however, no sooner had the door been closed on the little party than the six lads flung themselves on their knees before the merchant and craved his blessing. The intelligent reader will at once detect in the mysterious Fuscinelli "a Jesuit in disguise," and for once he will be right. The Neapolitan was in fact no other than Father William Baldwin, of the Society of Jesus. This distinguished Jesuit was at present in his thirty-third year, and had for some time been acting as professor of moral theology at Louvain. He had now been summoned to Spain, and as the lads were young men of good family and quality, it had

been thought good that he should accompany them on their journey. At this time the English fleet was besieging Dunkirk, and, as the peril of being intercepted by their cruisers was not small, the father had donned the disguise which we have described, and which was destined to serve him in very good stead.

Just as the lads were in their first joy at his arrival, a sailor came to announce the welcome tidings that the wind was now favourable for setting sail, and as it was already dark the party embarked with all possible secrecy. Unhappily the ubiquitous spies of Elizabeth were already on the track. Father Baldwin, in spite of his disguise, had been followed from Brussels to Saint Omer, and thence to Calais; and his meeting with the students had confirmed the suspicion that he was not what he seemed.

The little party were not indeed aware of this, but they knew that they were in no small danger, so that their dismay may be imagined when the wind suddenly changed again soon after they had come aboard, and their ship was unable to leave the harbour. Here was a sad dilemma; they were afraid to return to the shore, and yet they ran no small risk if they were seen on board. They were therefore reduced to conceal themselves in the body of the vessel, and here they actually remained for four long days, from Tuesday till Sunday, in constant fear of apprehension. Their fervent prayers for a favourable wind were at last heard, and on Sunday morning they set sail. But their troubles were only beginning. On the Monday evening a furious storm arose, which drove them on to the English coast. Next morning, which was the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, January 25, they found themselves near the mouth of the Thames, and fell an easy prey to a queen's ship there, stationed with two others in preparation for a voyage to the Indies. These ships formed, no doubt, part of Drake's last and ill-fated expedition to the Indies. No sooner were they perceived than a party from the queen's ship boarded the vessel under the pretext of seeing if she had been poaching for fish in English waters. The captain was at his wits' end. However, he was an old friend of the Jesuits, and had before now carried their students to and fro, and so he did what he could to conceal them. Besides, he knew well enough that if his contraband cargo were discovered he would run considerable risk of condign punishment. So he hid his passengers at the bottom of the hold and

covered them up with merchandize. The English came on board and pried into every hole and corner, but God was with His servants, and so they returned empty-handed, having discovered neither the passengers nor any prohibited merchandize. But in sign of their satisfaction they invited the captain to supper with them. This was unfortunate, for while our lads, who had emerged from the hold, were congratulating themselves on their narrow escape, the captain of their ship was drinking "not wisely but too well" on board the queen's galleon. He soon got drunk, says Bishop Yepes, "after the manner of the sailors of his country"? (the innuendo is delightful), and while in his cups of course let out the secrets of his heart, and told his new friends that he was taking six students to the seminary of Valladolid. He said nothing at all about the Jesuit, for he really supposed that he was what he seemed to be, a Neapolitan merchant. This fact speaks volumes both for the astuteness of Father Baldwin and the prudence of his companions; qualities which were soon indeed to be put to a severer test.

It was midnight, and our scholars were still in high glee over their escape, when, lo! with cries and oaths the English sailors again boarded the ship. Before the lads had time to seek a hiding-place they were seized and carried off to the queen's galleon, together with the Jesuit, amid the insulting jeers and triumphant shouts of their captors. All night long the poor lads were strictly guarded, for the ruffians pretended to fear that they would try to jump into the sea, like desperate men, unless an eye was kept on them. They had also to undergo a rigorous examination and the indignity of being stripped to the skin in the search for *Agnus Dei* and other prohibited objects of piety. As a matter of course, their beads, scapulars, etc., were found and triumphantly seized on, and the little money they had went the same way. The captain meanwhile despatched a courier to London to know the pleasure of the queen and council. This delayed them nearly a week, for the answer did not come back till Saturday, and meanwhile our young heroes had to suffer a little martyrdom. It would be difficult to imagine, far less describe, the ingenuity and multiplicity of the outrages and insults to which they were subjected. The English navy, says Bishop Yepes, is composed of the dregs of the people, and the seamen are more affected with heresy than any other class.

The Spaniards had indeed no cause for loving the Jack Tar of Elizabethan days, and there may be a spice of exaggeration in this statement; still it is easy to imagine the suffering and rough treatment that these refined and noble lads had to endure at the hands of a coarse and brutal crew, inflamed by hatred at once of Popery and of Spain.

Two of the students escaped at first much of this ill-treatment by pretending to be French, as they had lived some time in that country and knew the language well. But a little later they disclosed their real nationality, for the noble reason that they were unwilling to lose an occasion of suffering for the love of God. The result was that they were treated with even more barbarity than the rest.

One of them was asked by the captain if the queen was not head of the Church. His firm denial so enraged his questioner that he swore he would have stabbed him on the spot had he not been her Majesty's prisoner.

At last on Saturday, January 30, the answer from the council arrived. The captain was directed to send his prisoners up to Dartford, where the Lord High Admiral, the earl of Nottingham, then was. So they were sent thither, under the guard of soldiers, in the ship in which they had been taken. For greater security the queen's great galleon accompanied them until they stood well within the river. But though the place where they were captured was not more than six or seven leagues from Dartford, yet they took from Saturday morning to mid-day on Wednesday getting there, for the wind was always contrary. Our prisoners during this time suffered even more than before - they were, in fact, nearly starved to death; but fortunately they found a friend in the ship's cook, who was a Fleming. This good man supplied them surreptitiously with food, which was just sufficient to keep them alive. However, like the martyrs of old, they rejoiced in their sufferings, and on Wednesday they had all the consolation of making their confessions to Father Baldwin.

The Jesuit had not less to bear than the others. It was suspected that he was not what he appeared to be; it was even conjectured that he might be the very man he was. So the captors laid all sorts of traps to catch him. Sometimes when he was asleep they would

suddenly awaken him by calling out: "Baldwin!" At another time they would get some of the young sailors to offer, for a bribe, to take him secretly ashore by night. Another while they would cry out: "Baldwin, take care!" as though to warn him against some sudden danger. But the Jesuit was more than a match for them; he turned a deaf ear to all they said in English, and either made no reply at all or else he would ask them in Italian what their designs upon him were.

About mid-day on Wednesday they reached the Lord High Admiral's lodgings, and were at once examined by his secretary. They were asked the usual questions - where they had heard Mass in England, what priests they knew, and the rest; all these interrogations, of course, being put with the view of making them betray their friends. But the lads answered with great discretion. They said, for instance, that they never knew the real names of their Jesuit masters or of their fellow-seminarists, for they all went under an alias. They did not concern themselves with matters of state, and took no oath in the seminary with regard to such things; their one aim being to convert souls. They believed that the pope and the king of Spain did support the seminaries. As to the "crime" of having been "reconciled," this they never had committed, for they were born Catholics and had never left the Church. Nor could they be justly accused of having brought into England prohibited objects of devotion, for they had not come to England by their own will, but had been brought there by force. As to their companion, in France he was taken for a merchant, and they had only met him by chance at Calais.

On Friday the admiral came in person to examine them. He talked to the father in Italian, and said to him: "You say you are a merchant, but I suspect you are a priest or a Jesuit." He blamed the lads for having left the kingdom without license. He then returned to the court, which was lying about a mile off, taking with him the written examination. The secretary asked the little party if they would eat meat, it being Friday, but on their refusal he gave them meagre fare with a good grace.

While they were here it happened, on one occasion that Father Baldwin forgot himself for a moment and spoke to his companions

in English. Most fortunately, however, none of the heretics heard him, and the mistake passed unnoticed; but it must have given him a fright for the moment.

The secretary did his best to penetrate the mystery of the Jesuit's personality. He took one of the lads apart and promised him full pardon and a large reward if he would frankly tell him who this mysterious merchant really was. He told him that it was a great crime not to betray a traitor, and that he would be put to a cruel death, as well as the Italian, if the latter were ultimately discovered to be a Jesuit. He need not think to shield him, for that was impossible; their spies in Flanders would be sure to find out the truth, and then, woe betide him! But promises and threats were alike useless; the boy only replied that his companion was apparently an Italian merchant, and that they had better treat him well in consequence.

Our young heroes quite expected to be sent to Bridewell, but the admiral thought it better to treat them kindly. It was not forgotten how little had been gained by rigour in the case of those younger boys who had been taken in Ireland. It was, therefore, determined to give our students over to the archbishop of Canterbury, with orders to treat them kindly and coax them, if possible, into submission. Father Baldwin was kept for awhile in the admiral's house till it was decided what to do with him. During his sojourn there he was most courteously shown over the earl's mansion, and among other things a very beautiful picture of the crucifixion was there pointed out to him. One of those present asked what this picture represented, and on being informed, exclaimed: "Why, I always believed that Christ died by hanging by the neck after our fashion at Tyburn." Father Baldwin could hardly restrain his laughter, though he was filled with pity for the poor man's ignorance; but he managed to keep his countenance and to give no sign of having understood the remark.

At length an order came from the council that the Italian merchant was to be sent to Bridewell. He was accordingly taken to this horrible dungeon, the scene of the sufferings of so many faithful Catholics. In the same cell there were confined two other prisoners - one a Protestant minister, the other a Catholic of some position.

This poor man had been so cruelly racked that he had yielded to human frailty so far as to give information which had led to the apprehension and martyrdom of a priest. This weakness and its fatal result had filled him with despondency and almost despair. His conscience gave him no peace, and day and night he openly deplored: his misery, and especially his want of a confessor who might heal the wounds of his soul. What made his misery more intense was the fact that he had received notice of another racking, and he had a presentiment that he would die under the torture. The Jesuit was placed in the most cruel dilemma. How could he minister to this diseased mind without betraying himself to his enemies? He began by asking the minister in Latin what was the matter with their unfortunate fellow-captive. He then exhorted the poor Catholic, also in Latin, which he understood a little, trying to comfort and console him, urging him to make acts of contrition, since he could not procure a priest, and to place full confidence in the mercy of God. But the nearer the fatal time approached the more inconsolable the poor man grew, and he cried aloud in heartrending appeals for a priest. Father Baldwin was greatly troubled at this. He had only too much reason to fear that the poor man, who had already betrayed one priest, might under the agony of his second racking betray his own secret, if he confided it to him. And even if he did not, the Protestant minister could hardly be expected to keep silence; indeed, it seemed probable that he had been placed in that very cell in order that he might be detected. On the other hand, the tears and grief of the penitent afforded the strongest evidence of sincerity; and besides, who could tell but that God had sent him there on purpose to provide for the salvation of this particular soul? He, therefore, resolved to risk his life in the cause; and he asked the poor Catholic, in Latin, what pledge of fidelity he would give if he procured him a priest. The man was filled with intense joy at the prospect, and gave the most eager assurances of faith and secrecy. The father then advised him to prepare for confession, promising he would do his best to procure him a priest. That night, while the minister slept, he crept to the penitent's bedside and whispered to him that he was himself a priest. When he found the poor man could with difficulty understand his Latin, he gave him the same assurance in English. The penitent was overwhelmed with joy, and yet he could hardly bring himself to believe it; it seemed too good to be true. He felt

unable to make his confession that night; but by the next night his confidence was fully assured, and he made a good confession, with great contrition and deep' thankfulness. Strengthened by the divine sacrament, he went bravely and cheerfully to the torture-chamber, and there he proved the truth of his presentiment, for being torn asunder by the excessive racking, he rendered up his soul to God on the instrument itself.

Thus the mercy of God provided for the salvation of this poor soul, and now that this end was accomplished there was no need for the Jesuit still to remain in bonds. Soon after this, therefore (he had been about six weeks in prison), the Privy Council, being unable to prove that he was other than what he appeared to be, released him in exchange for another English prisoner named Hawkins, who had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards. It was not very long before they discovered the mistake they had made.

But we must return to our students whom we left under the care of Archbishop Whitgift. This stern Puritanical prelate had been directed to treat them with kindness, and on the whole he did so. He thought it his duty, nevertheless, to try to frighten them into submission by all sorts of threats, and they were incessantly worried by the arguments and exhortations of his chaplains, especially, as Father Cresswell tells us, by the foreign heretics, Adrian Saravia and de la Fontaine, preacher of the French church in London. These gentlemen retailed all sorts of calumnies against the Jesuits, who, they said, were the very worst people in the world - a pestilential race. De la Fontaine said it would be an act of virtue to rid the world of such vermin, for they were the plague of every commonwealth. And for proof of this he alleged it to be a certain and well-known fact that the French Jesuits had taught their disciples, and even enjoined as a penance on certain of their penitents, to undertake the assassination of the most Christian king. He also asserted that it was well known that the king of Spain made all the English seminarists in his dominions take an oath to return to England, after living some time at his expense, and there practise some villainy against their country's weal, such as the murder of the queen or other like crimes. When the lads replied that the oath which they had taken did not contain any such matter, it was answered that this intention was not disclosed at first, but only little

by little later on. The minister also declared that the Spanish people were bad, and that it was folly to turn one's back on the pleasures of home and fatherland in order to put up with all sorts of inconveniences elsewhere. To this the lads returned that it was God and Catholic religion and piety that they sought for, not ease or enjoyment.

Then Saravia, who was just then the archbishop's guest, rose and said that what his fellow said was true; and that he had himself been in Spain, and that, though there was some show of piety and religion there, yet there was nothing more than show. To this one of the boys remarked:

"Let us go there and see for ourselves. If we find you are right, we shall certainly be of your opinion."

But when a theologian of the archiepiscopal household rose to reply, the lads protested that they were no dovomes, but only rhetoricians, and that they were going to Spain for the very purpose of learning philosophy and theology.

"Then when you have heard," said the other, "all that the Papists can say on their side, you will be willing to listen to us also?"

"At present, sir," replied the lads, "we have heard the theology of neither side; we have only learnt the faith of our fathers, who were Catholics. Now we are going to hear the theologians of Spain, and afterwards, at our return, we will hear you others; perchance we shall then know how to reply to your arguments."

These bold replies were duly reported to the council, who were greatly incensed. The archbishop and his party had in the end to own themselves beaten. In vain they used their accustomed artifices, their misquotations of the sacred Scriptures and the fathers; in vain they even descended to more unworthy tricks, sometimes taking one apart and telling him that the others had promised to yield, and so on. In vain they dwelt on the cruel persecution the boys' parents would have to endure through their obstinacy, or dilated on the liberality with which the queen would herself have them educated at Oxford or Cambridge, in far greater comfort than they could have at the seminaries - all to no purpose;

their threats, arguments and promises were alike useless. Whitgift, in despair, determined at last to separate them, and disperse them in different parts of the kingdom under the charge of Protestant ecclesiastics. One was accordingly sent to Aylmer, bishop of London, another to the bishop of Winchester, a third to the dean of Westminster, a fourth to a certain Dr Edes, while the two others were still lodged at Lambeth.

The only one whose destination we can be sure of was John Copley, who was the one sent to the bishop of London. After six days, at the intercession of some of his friends, he was released on bail.

The one sent to Dr Edes had attracted the special attention of the archbishop, and it is likely enough that this would be the Venerable Thomas Garnet, who had much to suffer at various times through his relationship to the celebrated Jesuit provincial, Father Henry Garnet. However that may be, special efforts were made to pervert this young man. Several of his acquaintances were induced to write him letters full of caresses and promises, so as to win him over to their sect. The doctor always added to the letters some new calumnies against the Jesuits and seminaries. However, after some days the doctor, finding he made no progress, allowed the lad to go to his father's, that gentleman giving security for his safe custody. He had hardly been home a week when he fell very ill of a tertian fever, which chained him to his bed for six months. Meanwhile his relations did all in their power to procure his liberty, but did not succeed, partly because Whitgift suspected the lad would try to cross the seas again, partly because his mother did all she could to keep him, as he was her only son. At the end of six months the doctor urged the parents to send the young prisoner to Oxford, and this was done a few days later, as he was now convalescent. However, this proved to be the means of his escape, for when he got to Oxford he found that the doctor had not yet arrived there, and so he got witnesses to testify that he had really been at Oxford, and then, after arranging matters with one of his sureties who lived in those parts, he returned secretly to London and went to his home. Here he concealed himself for some days from the knowledge even of his own parents, so anxious was he to succeed in his plan of returning to the seminary. At last all turned out according to his desires. A certain high personage (possibly the Spanish ambassador)

provided for all his necessities, and gave him the means to prosecute his journey. So he embarked for Flanders, and got safely to Saint Omer. After a little while he was sent on to Valladolid, which this time he reached in safety.

The two who had remained at Lambeth received many visitors, some of whom came in order to pervert them, others in order to encourage them to remain firm. These latter told them that the world had its eyes fixed on them, and that people were filled with wonder at the effects of the education they had received in the seminaries; so that it would give great scandal and do untold harm to the Catholic cause if they yielded and went to church with the heretics.

Among others who came was the elder brother of one of them. He drew his brother apart, and, after encouraging him in his good resolutions, proposed a stratagem by which he might get his liberty. The back of the archbishop's palace looked on to some gardens which stretched down to the river bank; and there was a door opening on to the bank, which was generally kept open for the convenience of the pages and servants of the archbishop. The brothers, therefore, arranged that on a certain evening the elder should come with a boat to the said door and fetch his brother away. He would row him across to Westminster, where a shelter could easily be found.

It turned out, however, that, as bad fortune would have it, the archbishop had fixed on this same day for a move to one of his other palaces. In fact, that very morning he went off in great state, together with the larger part of his household, leaving the rest to follow next day with some of the furniture. Fortunately, our young prisoners were left with the latter party, so that all was not lost. But the river door as well as the garden door was shut and locked, and our young friend began to despair of making his escape. However, as God would have it, in the evening a servant opened the garden door, although the river door remained locked. This servant, however, was won over to the scheme, and he helped the lad to scale the wall of the garden which gave on the river bank. But here another difficulty awaited him. All this had delayed him beyond the appointed hour, and his brother had already come and gone.

Finding the door locked and no signs of the lad, he supposed that something must have happened to prevent his escape, and so, after waiting a little, he returned with his people to London. The poor lad did not know what to do. After waiting a long time in great perplexity he fell prostrate on the ground, and earnestly besought our Lord, to whose service he had dedicated his life, that, as He had begun this work of his escape, so He would deign to finish it, and show him what he ought to do in his present difficulty. After this, he determined to hide among the trees until the next day, when he would try to make his way to London; but, after waiting two hours, he was so benumbed with the cold that it seemed to him impossible he could live till morning. Just at this time too some servants of the archbishop appeared with torches, searching for him, but he was able to escape their notice, and they returned home without him.

At last he heard a noise on the river bank not far off. Running eagerly to the place he found a waterman who was just preparing to cross the river. The poor lad begged him to take him with him, but as he had no money the man refused. In the end he agreed to take the lad's mantle as payment, and then he rowed him across, and gave him into the bargain a coin to pay for his night's lodging. Next day, after some other difficulties, God caused our young confessor to fall in with his brother, and he found means of embarking for Saint Omer, where he arrived safely. A few days later arrived his fellow-prisoner who had also managed to effect his escape from the archbishop's house. The two were sent off to Valladolid to study philosophy. Bishop Yepes, writing in 1599, says they were still there at that time, awaiting their return to their country in due course.

When Father Cresswell wrote his life of Venerable Henry Walpole, these two had already reached Valladolid, and he took down from their lips his account of their adventure. This, however, is not half so full, or so interesting, as that given by Yepes. We do not hear how the two who were with the bishop of Winchester and the dean of Westminster managed to escape, but doubtless those dignitaries were not sorry to get rid of such dauntless and incorruptible young Papists:

A painful result of the episode must now be noted. According to

Father Cresswell, it was the fury of the council, on finding that they had been outwitted by Father Baldwin, which decided the fate of Father Robert Southwell and Father Henry Walpole, the two Jesuits whom they had then in their power. In their rage at losing Father Baldwin, they at once sent for the notorious Topcliffe and asked his advice. He recommended them to destroy the two fathers, then prisoners in the Tower, as a practical act of revenge. Dr Jessopp calls this "a curious story," but allows that "it is quite conceivable that, under the irritation that was aroused, the lords of the council resolved upon making an example of such Jesuit fathers as were then in prison, and that thus the trial of Southwell and Walpole was precipitated."

As to the subsequent history of the scholars, one of them, as we have said, subsequently obtained the crown of martyrdom. The Venerable Thomas Garnet left Valladolid in 1508, together with the Venerable Mark Barkworth, O.S.B. He was admitted to the Society of Jesus by his uncle, Father Henry Garnet, 29 September 1604. Just as he was about to leave England in order to make his novitiate in Belgium, he was taken prisoner and confined in the Gatehouse Prison, and subsequently in a loathsome dungeon in the Tower of London, where he had to lie for eight or nine months on the bare damp ground, Here he contracted the sciatica which afflicted him for the rest of his life. At last he was banished by royal edict in 1606 with forty-six other priests. He at once repaired to the new English noviceship at Louvain, which had been established by the generosity of the saintly Donna Luisa de Carvajal. He was, in fact, the first novice to enter the college, and Father More relates it as one of the glories of that house that its first subject had consecrated it by shedding his blood for the Catholic faith. In the autumn of 1607, having made his simple vows, he was sent back to England, where he was very soon arrested, and finally won his crown at Tyburn, 23 June 1608.

The Honorable John Copley was the son of Thomas Lord Copley of Gatton, who claimed the baronies of Welles and Hoo, and his mother was a Luttrell. He was only detained six days at the bishop of London's palace, and was then released, his friends giving bail in £300 for his not leaving the kingdom. He then spent two years "in worldly pleasures, hunting, society and such-like vanities, until at

length the desire of a better life brought" him to the English college at Rome. His sister Margaret married a Gage, and she and her husband were condemned to death for harbouring a priest. They were reprieved on the way to Tyburn, but afterwards banished and all their property confiscated.

William Worthington died in Spain in 1602, before he could return to preach the faith in England. It is not certain whether he belonged to the Blainscow family, of which we shall have much to say later on. He became a Jesuit before his death, and is frequently confounded with another William Worthington, who was admitted to the Society in 1608. Our William found his way to Valladolid by 5 January 1596. He was deputed, with another scholar, to present an address of condolence to King Philip III on his father's death. He died at Valladolid.

I have not found out much about the subsequent fate of the other three. There can be little doubt, I think, that they persevered to the end in the faith they had so bravely confessed before men. May God grant us all the like grace!

A Faithful Friend

In the latter half of Queen Elizabeth's reign there lived in the county of Monmouth a Catholic family named Salisbury. One of its members was a young lad who was remarkable for his personal beauty. John Salisbury was as gifted intellectually as physically, and the handsome boy attracted the admiration of all who knew him. His dearest school friend was a certain William Robbins, also a good Catholic, and full of zeal for the faith.

One day it chanced that a great Irish nobleman was passing through the country on his way home to Ireland, and he happened to come across our lads who were then at school. He was at once delighted with John's handsome face and lively wit, and determined to take him back with him as a page or personal attendant. He therefore proposed the scheme to the lad, and without giving him time even to consult his parents, carried him off in his train. Poor William was left in despair. Not only had he lost his friend, but he had the sorrow of knowing that John was only too likely to suffer both in faith and morals from his new surroundings. The earl was a heretic (had conformed no doubt in order to win favour with Elizabeth), and was John likely to be strong enough to resist his master's solicitations and example?

But what could the poor lad do to help his friend? He could only recommend him very earnestly to God in prayer.

The persecution was growing fiercer at this time in Wales, owing to the efforts of Bennet, Protestant bishop of Hereford, a most bitter enemy of the Catholic religion. Even the young did not escape its fury; and so before long William Robbins found himself a prisoner for conscience' sake.

For many months he lay in close confinement, but his spirit was not subdued nor his fervour quenched. The one thought that troubled him was his old schoolfellow alone among the heretics in Ireland. Day and night the lad's prayers went up to God for John, day and night he thought how he might yet help him to escape the perils that surrounded him.

And so when at last he was released, his first thought was to hasten to the rescue. It was indeed a difficult undertaking for a lad like him to go alone into a strange land among a people, whose habits, customs and language were so different from those in which he had been reared, and who at the time had only too much reason to hate the very name of Englishman; but he was a brave lad, and the difficulties did not daunt him. He was determined, as far as in him lay, to save his friend's soul. And so he set out, He had no idea where the earl lived, but God and his good angel guided him, even as they had inspired the thought that sent him on his journey, and in spite of all difficulties he reached the place in safety.

Overjoyed with his success, the good lad inquired of the earl's servants if a certain John Salisbury were not with his lord. He found he was right and begged to see his friend. John soon arrived radiant in silk and gold, and looked inquiringly, doubtfully, at the poor footsore traveller in his rags, pale and emaciated as he was by the effects of his long imprisonment. "Who may this be?" he asked. And he would not believe that it was his old friend William, until he gave him unmistakable proofs and spoke of facts known only to themselves. And then William had a hard and weary task. John had been flattered and made much of; he was the earl's favourite page, his confidant and alter ego; he could not possibly leave him; his master would never consent. Perhaps in his heart of hearts he hardly wanted to give up ease and luxury, fine clothes and honeyed words, for penury and persecution, hard fare and beggar's rags, which was all poor William could offer him. "It is impossible," he declared, "the earl will never let me go. And were I to run away without asking leave, he would send men on horseback to pursue me, and I should infallibly be caught and taken back here in disgrace." As a matter of fact William's fears had been only too well founded; the earl, by kindness and presents and so on, had already begun to draw his page's heart away from the true faith. But his faithful friend would not despair. He told John over and over again, day by day, that he would never go away until he consented to accompany him. At last the lad was conquered by his friend's persistence, God gave him the grace to yield, and he agreed to go on the first opportunity. So they made all their preparations for a secret flight and waited their chance. Presently, one day the earl went out hunting very early in the morning and left his page at

home, since he was hardly equal to the fatigues of the chase. Now was their chance. The lads took the first opportunity of slipping away, not together, but separately, and met in the place they had previously agreed upon. They then made for the sea, and though they had to journey for several days through a totally unknown country, they arrived at last, by God's providence, at Waterford. Here they found many excellent Catholics who gave them every assistance. They were thus enabled to take ship for Bilboa in Spain, and from that port found their way safely to the English College of Valladolid.

With what joy did they find themselves once more in a Catholic house! They both gave themselves zealously to study, for their one desire now was to prepare themselves for the priesthood, and to return, in God's good time, to preach the faith to their countrymen.

John's schooling had been cut short, as we have seen; and when he reached the college he was found to have forgotten most of what he had learnt. In fact, he scarcely knew the rudiments of grammar; and yet in a year and a half, or less, he made such progress both in Greek and Latin that he astonished every one. In fact, he knew as much as many of the students who had passed years in study, and was capable of producing admirable verses and compositions in both languages. Nor was this all; he grew in piety as rapidly as in learning, so that the rector of the college was wont to declare that if it had done nothing else for God's Church but educate John Salisbury, it would have done enough to justify its existence and repay the generosity of the king, who had done so much for it.

What joy for the faithful friend who had risked and suffered so much in order to give this soul to God, this labourer to the vineyard! He finished his own studies the year before his friend, and was sent out on the mission in 1602. He returned to his native country, where he did great things for God. John was sent out the following year, and in 1604 he joined the Society of Jesus. After his novitiate his zeal and piety shone out all the more brightly, and the old chronicler, from whose pages we have gleaned this story, compares him to a burning torch illuminating all hearts wherever he went, and kindling them with the fire of divine love. The pretty, petted page had become a self-sacrificing and zealous religious, a

notable preacher and confessor, loved and revered by rich and poor alike. Many were the conversions he made, many the scandals he repaired, many the sorrows he soothed. And all this, under God, was owing to the faith and the charity of his old schoolfellow. The Jesuit's heart must have glowed within him as he meditated on the inspired words: "A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure." "Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend, and no weight of gold and silver is able to countervail the goodness of his fidelity." "A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality, and they that fear the Lord shall find him." (Ecclesiasticus 4:14,16)

The Story of the Worthington Boys

On an April morning in the year of grace 1581, a little party on horseback might have been seen wending their way through country lanes and over rough bridle paths through the part of Lancashire which lies between Preston and Wigan. There was nothing to arrest the attention of the passers-by in this little group, which consisted of a gentleman and his young wife, with a servant in attendance. But a curious observer might have remarked that they seemed to choose by preference the most unfrequented paths and the worst roads, and that they carefully avoided the villages and homesteads which lay on their way. If such an observer could have followed them unperceived, he might also have been struck by the fact that when, secure from prying eyes, they rode along some wooded lane or across some wild moorland, the man-servant seemed to lose the aspect of respect and submission which became his position, and mixed freely in the conversation as an equal. Nay, he might be said to be treated rather with deference than with familiarity by his young master and mistress, though indeed during the greater part of the journey the party rode in silence. This servant was a striking-looking man, some forty years of age, with keen, intellectual face and clear, piercing eyes that had a strange charm in them when he fixed them on those he was addressing; but generally they were turned upward as he rode, and the firm lips moved softly and incessantly as if their owner were buried in the deepest abstraction or conversing with One unseen.

As the day wore on the little party drew in sight of a fine house surrounded by a beautiful park. It was the object of their journey; nor, apparently, were they unexpected, for as they approached the steps in front of the mansion were filled with figures waving eager, joyous welcome; and no sooner had they alighted than their horses were seized and led away by the stalwart sons of the house, while the riders were carried off in triumph up the steps into the grand old hall and thence into the best parlour of the house. Here the family flocked around their guests; and a fine sight it was to see the noble-looking master of the house with his twelve sons around him, the youngest a boy of nine, fall down on their knees as soon as the doors were closed, and beg the benediction of him who had come to

them as the servant of their guests.

For in those days of cruelty and bloody persecution a priest could only travel with infinite precautions, and aided by a thousand disguises, so that there is no cause for surprise to see this family prostrate with tears of joy at the feet of a man dressed in the gay livery of a domestic servant. And this was no ordinary priest; it was one on whose head a price was set; one who was being tracked, as he journeyed through the land, by a thousand spies, denounced as a traitor in the pulpits of every town; one whose portrait was hung up in the market-places that he might be more easily captured; one who when captured could look for no better mercy than the Tower and its rack and the Tyburn gibbet.

No ordinary priest and no common guest! Blessed Edmund Campion (for it was no other than that famous missionary) raised his hand - that hand so soon to be torn and crippled into a useless burden by the cruel rack - and gave the benediction so eagerly desired.

Nor indeed were his generous hosts undeserving of it; it was no light proof of devotion to the faith to receive with joy into one's house a man whose life was proscribed by the law, and to entertain whom meant a cruel death for the host and ruin for all he loved, if it should ever come to the ears of the blood-hounds on the track. But Mr Worthington of Blainscow Hall was not one of those who hesitated or who flinched from the sacrifice that God demanded of him, and he received the hunted Jesuit within his doors "like an angel of God and a messenger for his soul's health."

The blessing that fell upon him in consequence it is the object of these pages to reveal.

Quickly the great news spread like wildfire among the faithful Catholics, then as now nowhere so numerous as in those parts of Lancashire; eager crowds flocked to the hall by night to see the missionary, to hear his burning words and to receive at his hands the inestimable blessings of those sacraments that now could only be obtained at the risk of life and fortune. Nor were they unrewarded; spellbound they hung upon his lips as the great orator, who had long ago been the pride and boast of Oxford, whose silver words had charmed the haughty queen herself, preached to them in

impassioned words the old truths of that old faith which was being trampled out and drowned in blood through the length and breadth of the land. There was a fire in his words which thrilled through the hearts of his hearers, and seemed to them (as to those men of Jerusalem who crowded round Saint Peter on the day of the great Pentecost) a very torrent flowing from the hidden source of the Divine Spirit within him.

He preached daily, and for many a generation there was handed down the tradition of those wondrous sermons; and old men would tell their grandchildren how their fathers had sat in the chapel of Blainscow Hall and heard the martyred Father Campion preach his great discourse on the "Hail Mary" or "The Ten Lepers."

But the missionary was not left in undisturbed peace to reap the harvest of souls; there were enemies on the watch; there were spies on his track. The news had somehow filtered out beyond the little faithful circle who tried to guard it so carefully; and one day, when it was least expected, the terrible report was heard, the pursuivants were on their way to Blainscow. Alas! the report was true, but it did not reach the Worthington family in time to make any provision for the safety of their illustrious guest. Father Campion was in the garden, very likely making his meditation, when the cruel pursuivants, those bloodhounds that were the dread and the scourge of all good Catholics in Elizabethan days, burst in upon the house. What was to be done? They had entered by stealth; and before the master knew it, before the priest had time to retire to a hiding-place, they were ransacking every room, pulling up the floors, piercing the wainscoting with gimlets, peering into every hole and cranny and pocketing any stray objects of value they could lay their hands on; all in the name of the pure gospel, and in defence of the new religion! But others meanwhile searched the garden, and in the farmyard came suddenly upon Father Campion, who had just been warned of his danger by one of the maid-servants. This woman had a ready wit, and her promptitude saved for a time the Jesuit, and staved off the ruin that impended on her master's family.

Feigning anger at some familiarity which the supposed servant-man had addressed to her, she retorted with sharp contemptuous words,

and by a sudden blow pushed him into the dirty stagnant pond beside which they were standing. The pursuivants, no doubt, laughed heartily at the joke as they saw the unlucky wight emerge out of the filthy pond, his clothes dripping and his whole form caked in the mud which formed the most effectual of disguises; and doubtless, too, there was many a rough pleasantry thrown at the luckless swain, and many a coarse compliment paid to the Amazon who had so summarily rejected his advances.

"Let them laugh who win!" as Blessed Everard Hanse said on his way to martyrdom; and this time at least the pursuers were foiled, and the sheriff's men had to retire grumbling and discomfited from Blainscow Hall. The father was saved. All praise to the woman's wit which had thus preserved him for future labours and for future sufferings! No doubt fervent congratulations were showered upon her when at last the enemy had departed and all was quiet again.

But it is time to know a little better the inhabitants of Blainscow Hall, and especially those who are to be the heroes of these pages.

The master of the house, Mr Richard Worthington, was a man of between forty and fifty years of age, and a very fervent Catholic, though his father had fallen into apostasy and had even betrayed to the government the whereabouts of his second son Thomas, a priest, who had been educated at Douai and Rheims under Cardinal Allen. Thomas, however, had escaped the snares laid for him, and at the date of Father Campion's visit seems to have been staying with his brother at Blainscow. The father was probably dead. Mr Worthington had twelve sons, as we have said, and it is with four of these sons that we have particularly to make acquaintance. Their names were Thomas, Robert, Richard and John; and they were the youngest children of the family, Thomas being thirteen years old and John nine at the date of Father Campion's visit. The famous Jesuit had a most extraordinary influence over boys and young men. In days gone by, as a tutor at Oxford, he had been the idol of the university, his magic influence had grouped around him a crowd of students who made it their glory to follow him about, to hang on his lips, to applaud his every word, and even to imitate him down to his very tone of voice and gesture. If he had had so much influence when living a life which was hateful to him through

the secret reproaches of his conscience, what must not have been his spell when, with tranquil soul and mind at ease, he came back to his own people, tried and purified in the strictest school of religious life, with all the charm of a consummate sanctity, a bewitching eloquence, a profound learning, and - what would perhaps above all endear him to young hearts - a life surrounded by the glamour of adventure, of daily and deadly peril, incurred by his love of England and his thirst for souls? So it was at any rate, and so it had been proved over and over again. The sight, the words, the example of Father Campion, as he passed a ten days' visit at Mount Saint John, the picturesque abode of the Harringtons in the midst of the wooded precipices of the Hambleton Hills, had so wrought on the mind of young William Harrington, the eldest son of the house, that he gave up all, family, friends, fortune and life, to follow in the missionary's footsteps; and, leaving his beautiful Yorkshire home, fled across the seas, only to return to England to win the martyr's crown. So it was to be with one who stood by Blessed Campion under the fatal tree at Tyburn, and who left that bloody scene fired with one thought, one aim - to imitate him who had just laid down his life for his friends. One more Jesuit in him was added to the list of martyrs, and we love and honour him now as Venerable Henry Walpole.

No wonder, then, that among the most eager and assiduous hearers of those burning and passionate instructions which poured forth unceasingly from the missionary's lips, were to be found the four younger sons of the master of Blainscow Hall.

We do not know how long it was that Father Campion stayed with the Worthingtons, but it was between Easter and Whitsuntide, in April or May, that he was there, Easter falling that year on April 16; and he passed, we are told, most of the great forty days of Paschaltide here or at Rossall Hall, the home of Mrs Allen, who was the widow of the great cardinal's elder brother, and whose history is closely connected with those of the Worthingtons.

Very possibly Mrs Allen came with her three daughters, Helen, Catharine and Mary, girls from twelve to nine years old, to listen to the Jesuit's sermons at Blainscow Hall. It would not be, however, for the first time on such occasions that the little Mary Allen met

young Thomas Worthington, whose life was one day to be linked with hers by the closest of ties. The two elder daughters were to finish their lives in the peaceful cloisters of the Augustinian nuns of Louvain, but not before they had had their part of suffering, persecution and terror, a lot singularly like that of their young playfellows at Blainscow.

Father Campion came and went, but his presence - may we not venture to assert it confidently - had not been in vain; and if in the history to which these lines are but a prelude there glows forth in every page the fire of an earnest and manly enthusiasm, the light of an intrepid and more than common constancy, it may surely be imputed to the teaching which flowed from those inspired lips, and which had sunk so deeply into boyish hearts. Such are the thoughts with which one rises from a perusal of the stirring story to which we are about to introduce our readers. It is to be found in an old Latin tome, little known except to those who have made a study of the history of our Elizabethan martyrs, yet famous among all the documents that we possess on those glorious heroes - the "Concertatio" of Father Bridgewater. The edition which contains the story of the Worthington boys was printed in Treves in 1588, only four years later than the events which it relates. We know of no contemporary document that more vividly portrays the nature of the persecution, so long, insidious and unrelenting, which our forefathers who remained faithful to the old religion had to endure in the days of "good Queen Bess."

The history is headed thus: "The conflict of four boys of rank, Thomas, Robert, Richard and John Worthington, of whom the youngest was under twelve years of age, and the eldest did not exceed sixteen; also of. . . Thomas Worthington, priest."

This is how it begins - and we will now let the writer, who was perhaps Father Thomas Worthington himself, tell his story in his own words; reserving to ourselves, however, somewhat to abbreviate his remarks when they seem unnecessarily diffuse.

"How fiercely and cruelly the persecution in England raged in those times even to the frequent effusion of blood, is abundantly attested in other books and letters, and is being confirmed every day by new examples. We now give one such example, to show that even boys

of a tender age were not safe from its ferocity, though it did not come to blood-shedding. This calamity is indeed augmented because the authority of the magistrates, who were wont to be appointed in each county for the suppression of crime and the preservation of the public peace, is now converted, by a new proclamation of the sovereign and the wicked laws in vigour, to the overthrow of the Catholics as the plague of the state. And certain vile fellows, who, in order to give some proof of their good faith and honesty, assist at acts of our holy religion, will at the same time betray the priests and denounce the names of the Catholics to the magistrates.

A certain infamous pursuivant in the employ of the sheriff of Lancashire - who was, at this time, Edmund Trafford, Esquire, of Trafford - reported that Thomas Worthington, priest, and four of his nephews, Thomas, Robert, Richard and John Worthington, were staying at the house of Mr Sankey, of Sankey, near Warrington, no mean town of that county. Thinking that, by well-laid plans, others might be captured at the same time as these, the sheriff immediately despatched the under-sheriff, with twenty of his javelin-men, who, about three o'clock in the morning, most unseasonably aroused Sankey House, and, forcing their entrance, seized the four above-named lads.

This happened on 12 February 1584 (new style).

They strove as soon as possible to extract from them by threats and terror whether they were intending. to go to one of the pope's seminaries at the instance of their father or uncle, also the place and time they had last seen the latter, whether they had attended mass, and pressed them with other questions of this sort.

Having made this preliminary examination, and searched every cranny of the house for Father Worthington without result, they hurried off to the house of Mr Havard, of Hurleston, two miles distant, and diligently searched there, and also every lodging and other house in Warrington where there was the slightest suspicion that a priest might be harboured. They also put guards both upon Warrington Bridge and the banks of the Mersey, and at other points, in order to prevent any possibility of escape. This storm raged for two or three days, but they could not find Thomas Worthington, the

desired prey, though he lay all the time at the house of a sick gentleman in Warrington itself, to whom he had. come the previous day for the purpose of consoling him in his illness, being entirely unconscious of the danger impending.

The nieces of Dr William Allen also escaped. They were in the same town under charge of another uncle. Had they been found they would have fared badly on account of the hatred in which the doctor's name was held.

Being unable by any threats or cajolery to shake the constancy of the boys, they left the two youngest in charge of Mr Sankey, in whose house they were seized, and took the elder lads, with the two gentlemen they had captured, to Wigan, where, on the same day, there was a meeting of the earl of Derby with Chatterton, the pretended bishop of Chester, and other commissioners, to inquire into the. affairs of Catholics. After undergoing some examination, the two boys were conducted on the fourteenth to Preston, a village not far from Wigan, in order that they might finally appear before a new gathering of the commissioners with their two younger brothers, who were sent for from Mr Sankey's, in order, if possible, on account of their weaker age and judgement, to prevail more with them than with the two elder ones.

To do this they kept the smallest boy from food for a long time, and then, just before he went in to the commissioners, plied him with drink, more than he wanted or could bear, in order to confuse the poor child's brain. But they failed in this, for the boy's senses remained quite clear; and when introduced into the presence of the earl of Derby, he complained of the treatment he had received, having been given nothing to eat all day (it was now six o'clock in the afternoon) and made to drink so much. And the boy added that he thought they had done it to make him drunk, but they had only succeeded in making him so ill that he could not behave as he should in his lordship's presence.

But the commissioners (among whom was Chatterton, bishop of Chester) took no notice of the matter, and began to question him about his father, his uncle the priest, and others; to which the boy only replied that he was in such pain that he could not stop in the place. The poor child was actually forced to vomit in their presence,

whereupon the servants were blamed; though our author shrewdly suspects some of their masters had had a finger in the plot.

Then they tried the eldest boy, Thomas, who, as we have said, was sixteen years old, and endeavoured to coax him by all sorts of blandishments and promises to go to church. The earl told him he would then make him one of his pages, and do many other good services to his brothers, and that he need not believe what he heard at church, but simply go there to set an example to his brothers. The boy remaining firm, the other commissioners urged him not to reject so great a benefit, Chatterton, the sham bishop, being specially forward. At first he tried smooth words, but then, taking to a severe tone, he adjured the lad by the obedience he owed to the queen, that he should take his oath to reply truly to any question that should be put to him.

The boy refused modestly to take this oath, saying he did not understand what it would bind him to.

"But if you are willing to tell the truth," said Chatterton, "you may be sure you can safely swear."

But he replied he would tell the truth, only he could not injure himself and his dearest friends; wherefore he prayed them to excuse him from swearing.

"Won't you take your oath," said Chatterton, banteringly, "that the handkerchief I hold is a handkerchief?"

"No, forsooth," replied the lad, "since there is not sufficient cause to take an oath for that."

They mocked at the word "forsooth," which they said was a sign of Papistry, and swore that the Papists were Anabaptists who thought it a sin to take an oath on any subject. But not being able to break the boy's constancy they dismissed him.

Then they examined the two others, one by one, but by God's grace they got nothing out of them that could hurt the faith or their Catholic relations and friends.

The boys, indeed, gave such an example of constancy and intrepidity as greatly to encourage other Catholics who were examined later on; and they really put to shame the commissioners, who very much regretted that they had held the examination in public. In future, therefore, they took care to interrogate the lads in private.

A certain Fox, in particular, was appointed to question them, and he did so both before and after they had seen the commissioners. He made a great to do about the earl's magnificent promises, the stupidity of losing such an opportunity of advancing in life, how he hoped that his sons, who were so very dear to his heart, might have such a chance given them, etc., etc. But the lads preferred to beg their bread as Catholics, rather than to live as schismatics in the palaces of the earl and the pseudo-bishop, amid all delights and abundance.

One of the men who had been taken with the boys, was then dealt with. He proved as constant as his young masters, but we pass over the details.

Their cousin, George Hathersale, was committed to the Fleet Prison, Manchester, where he had much to suffer, being tied for some time with a chain and padlock to a post.

The Worthingtons were also sent to Manchester, and they asked to go to the house of correction there; but the commissioners refused, fearing that the company and pious conversation of the other Catholic prisoners would only strengthen them in their constancy. So they were put in a house together, where for the first month they were pretty kindly treated, though constantly tempted to yield. Among the tempters was one Mr Ashton sent by Chatterton, who was astonished at their steadfastness, and said that at that rate Papistry would never be rooted out of England, if mere boys could flout them and their religion in this way. So they began to treat them more severely, diminishing by degrees their food and the other conveniences of life.

They were even threatened with being brought before the next assizes and tried for high treason, unless they would agree to go to church. This was said of course to frighten them; but our lads,

taking it seriously, began diligently to prepare themselves for death, praying constantly for courage and fortitude, and determining more than ever not to yield a jot of the Catholic faith.

The bishop hinted at the same thing, though he did not clearly assert it, lest afterwards he should be accused of lying; that is to say, he called them *czaztors*, adding that if he lived he should see that they were forced to go to church.

One day, seeing he grew more and more furious, a certain Bull, a toady of this pseudo-prelate, offered to tame their obstinacy with the rod, and promised that in a few days they would be only too glad to obey the queen.

"Bravo!" cried the bishop, "you've hit it, my Bull! Don't spare them till they become more tractable."

So the next morning Bull entered the room where our lads were confined, armed with four or five long rods; and having pulled the eldest boy out of bed, he threw him on the floor, where he belaboured his poor little back with more than twenty blows, crying out all the while, "I'll make you set a good example to your brothers." The boy only replied, "It is not lawful for me to attend your conventicles, and join-in your prayers." Bull then went for the second lad, and finding him firm, cried out, "Prepare yourself for a whipping;" which the boy did most generously. But first the man turned to the two younger brothers, who also refused to yield, whereupon he told them it was a good thing for them they had their clothes on, however he would find another opportunity. He then commanded the two elder brothers to be put in separate rooms, and took the two younger with him to see the bishop. After being dragged from one magistrate to another, John, the youngest child was taken into the prelate's household, the elder was given over to a Dutch Puritan called "Deutonium," who asked to have him.

About nightfall Bull returned to the elder boys, and told them the bishop commanded that if they would not go to church, they were to be put in irons, and taken to the nearest schoolmaster next morning.

The gaoler pretended to be going to fasten on the fetters next day,

but remarked before he began, "How much better it would be for you to go to our church services than put this disgrace on yourselves and your friends."

"We are quite ready to be bound, and in a case like this there is no shame or ignominy," was the reply. "Well, go this time without the chains," said their gaoler, "in spite of the superintendent's orders; and I will carry them with me under my cloak."

The schoolmaster at first tried to persuade them to go to church, but all in vain. Then he said that the lord superintendent (the Lutheran name for bishop) had commanded - that they should learn the new church catechism. But they refused to be taught out of any book treating of religious matters.

Nevertheless, they were often taken to this school, and much bullied and tormented by the other boys there, who had imbibed the heretical poison. But some were touched by their example and their pious words, and began to incline towards the Catholic faith. For when they were pressed to render an account of the faith that was in them, they brought forth arguments that their schoolfellows could not answer; no, nor yet Oliver Cartwright, a heretical preacher who used to go there to sow the seeds of error in the children's breasts.

The man used to boast much of his learning because he had refuted a book by Richard Bristowe called "Postulata ab Hereticis," and he showed them the book, which indeed hardly deserved the name of a refutation, for one of the lads often turned these very same arguments so skillfully against their author, that he drove the wretched man completely into a corner.

Their guardian, or rather gaoler, used to annoy them in this way; one day, coming back from a sermon, he cried out, "Oh! how I wish you had been at the sermon today, for it was fully proved and established that there was once a woman who was consecrated pope."

Then Robert, the second boy, moved with zeal, exclaimed, "He who dared say this lied famously and impudently!"

"But it was our bishop!" exclaimed the gaoler.

"What then?" said the boy, "I don't except him more than any one else; it was a sin for him to preach this publicly, and a sin for you to listen." The gaoler was furious, and called all present to witness to these words, while he drove the lad away from his table, and even turned him into the street.

He was, therefore, brought before the bishop and the commissioners, who tried in vain to frighten him.

The prelate, not being able to confirm his fable, passed the matter over in silence, and gave the boy to another keeper, who should be more discreet than the former.

Then Richard, the third boy, was accused of having refused to take his cap off to the bishop when he met him in the street, so, to punish this offence, he was handed over to a constable, who was to restrain him more severely. This was a cruel and bitter man.

But the Dutchman soon asked for him back; perhaps, being a Puritan, he was rather pleased at the boy's contempt for the bishop, for these parliament bishops who aped the manners of the true bishops of ancient days, were not in favour with the Puritans. He tried then to coax and wheedle the lad, promising that if he would go to a sermon he should be apprenticed to a merchant, and should inherit all his father's estates, which the elder brothers had forfeited by their obstinacy. But it was all to no avail.

Meanwhile, little John was at the bishop's palace, treated with great kindness. He sat at the prelate's table, and was often invited to sing and play to his lordship, and he was given all he asked for. For instance, when the other pages asked for a holiday and were refused, John had only to ask for them, and was never disappointed. All this, of course, was done to gain the poor child's heart. And specially they tried to coax him to eat meat in Lent, Chatterton often saying to him, "What's this I hear, Johnny, that you refuse good wholesome food? Why do you abstain from a scruple of conscience, when you know nothing about such things? Don't you see me eat flesh meat?"

"Yes, answered John, "for you eat of all that's put on the table, whatever it may be!"

This retort so incensed the bishop, that he sent the child in future to eat with the servants, whose table was by no means groaning with flesh and fish.

One day the prelate was ill, and as he lay in bed, the doctor sitting beside him, some one read aloud passages from that odious "Book of Martyrs" by Fox. On which occasion, Mrs Catherine, the wife, or rather sham-wife of the sacrilegious priest, began talking to John about these same false martyrs of Fox's and about all the horrible cruelties of Queen Mary's reign. John replied, "If some Catholic prince should obtain the throne of England nowadays, he would deal in just the same way with my lord, the superintendent there, for he would most certainly be burnt for heresy!"

"Not at all!" roared out the "superintendent" from his bed; "for I should not be so obstinate and pertinacious against a popish king; if he commanded me to do something, as the Papists are commanded now, I should obey like a good subject!"

"That wouldn't save you," retorted the boy, "whether you pretended to be converted or not, you would be delivered all the same to the avenging flames." This speech so excited Chatterton, that it made him grow much worse, and, as the doctor testified, nearly proved fatal to him.

So, as the expense they were put to on John's account seemed quite wasted, they sent him back to Manchester to be imprisoned with his eldest brother, Thomas.

The commissioners then gave orders that they should be carried by main force to church, on hearing which they yielded so far as to walk thither on their feet, as they would have been forced to go there anyhow.

The heretics thereupon spread abroad the report that they had yielded, and had been converted from Popery. This grieved our lads intensely, and they sought for an opportunity of setting things right. And, as the sham bishop was just then about to move to Chester,

Thomas found an opportunity of presenting him with a written protest in his own and his brother's name, to the effect that they went to church only under coercion, and that to make the matter clear, they had determined next time that they would only go there if dragged by main force; and that they were prepared to be imprisoned and tortured in the house of correction, or anywhere else he might choose. They ended by protesting that by the grace of God they would never consent to the bishop's religion, either by word or sign.

The prelate received the lad blandly at first, thinking he had only come to ask for more liberty, and gave him a small present of pocket money; but on reading the paper he waxed furious and demanded his money back, which the lad returned much more willingly than he had received it. He swore they should not go to the house of correction, since Matthew Travers and other Papists were confined there, and they would only grow worse by being in their company. "But," he said, I will take care that you are corrected and chastised, and will see that you *do* go to church, if I live." He ordered that they should be kept more strictly in future.

Meanwhile their friends made great intercession for them, and at last the high sheriff promised that they should be set at liberty if two of their friends would give sureties that they should not be sent abroad. Eight persons promised to do so; but since they were schismatics for the sake of worldly advantage, and sometimes went to the church, the high sheriff and the other commissioners incited them to persuade the boys to do the same. This they promised seriously to do; but the boys were steadfast, although their would-be seducers falsely pretended that it was their parents' wish that they should yield. At last the sheriff said: "If you will go only once to a sermon I will give you over to your friends, who will take you home with them."

"By no means," replied the brothers; "if we would have done that, we could have gone home long ago without troubling any sureties."

So they were still kept in prison, to the shame of the sheriff who had given his word. Since the boys, however, were living exposed to great danger, both of faith and morals, and also suffered by the loss of their studies, it was settled that something must be done; and

at last Thomas and John were enabled, by the help of some friends, to escape.

Chatterton was very angry, and complained to the earl of Derby when they met at Manchester of this escape. They forthwith sent for Robert Worthington, the second - boy, and examined him about the matter, and threatened that, should they be retaken, much greater sufferings and afflictions awaited them; their father would be in danger of losing all his property, etc., etc. On the other hand, they promised him all prosperity and worldly advantages if he would but lend his ear to only one sermon. But he refused as he had been accustomed to do before, and with great courage of heart and more assurance than ever, professed the orthodox faith. So at last the earl assented to the superintendent's proposal that the boy should be sent to Chester Castle, for being thus in a safe place he would be unable either to escape or hold conversation with Catholics or receive advice from them.

Tuesday after Trinity Sunday was the day selected for Robert's journey to Chester; but the design was postponed till Corpus Christi day, nor was it ever carried out, as we shall see.

Two intimate friends of the boy having ascertained the day on which he was to be sent thither, after taking common counsel and concerting their plans, determined to meet him on the way and liberate him from the merciless grasp of his enemies if it were possible. They prepared for the worst, for the affair was a dangerous one; and mounting their horses each took a servant on foot as attendant. One went with his servant to an inn at Manchester in readiness to follow the boy on his leaving; the other stayed at a village called Budworth in order to reconnoitre early in the morning and learn the strength of the boy's escort.

Next morning the one at Budworth went out to meet the boy and his guard; and, finding to his joy that he was only accompanied by one man on foot, he at once proceeded to talk to his keeper, and to throw him off his guard, asked him various questions:

"Whose child is this? Where are you taking him? For what purpose?" and so on. After a little conversation they parted, and the gentleman with his servant went on towards Manchester to meet his

friend, who was following the prisoner at a distance. The thing was clear enough that by some scheme they could easily, when fairly in the country, carry off the boy from his solitary keeper. They, therefore, dismissed the two footmen as unnecessary.

So next the one from Manchester came up, and hastened his pace as he saw the boy with his keeper. He greeted them in the customary manner, and asked the boy if he was not tired with his journey; and presently, with the consent of his keeper, put him up on his own horse. So on they went a mile or two together, and rested awhile at a tavern by the road-side. When they set off again the gaoler allowed the boy to be put on the horse; nay, put him up himself, and loudly praised the kindness of the gentleman. But the horse by degrees went a little faster and faster till there was quite an interval between it and the keeper on foot, when all at once the gentleman, putting spurs to his steed, cried out: "Farewell, farewell, my good fellow! I will save you the trouble; tell your master that we are making straight for London;" and forthwith galloped off.

The man, all astonished and confounded, began to swear and pursue after the fugitives, but all to no purpose.

Just at this time the other confederate, who had been lagging a little behind, quickened his pace, and coming up with the frantic gaoler pretended to pursue the runaways for a while. He had been waiting for an opportunity of helping on the affair, as had been prearranged. So pricking his horse after the fugitives, he made as though he were in hot pursuit, till seeing that they were now out of danger he turned back to the panting keeper, and bade him be tranquil and calm and not to injure his health by over exertion, for running was no use. The good fellow acquiesced, and most people thought all the better of him for it; for hardly any one took it ill that the children should have made their escape, except, perhaps, the bishop and a few of his ministers, who, nevertheless, were careful not to go to any great expense in recapturing them.

But the three boys were betrayed not long afterwards, as they were going to the house of a Staffordshire gentleman, by certain of those spies who watch the roads at night to see who goes by.

And so they had to spend the night out of doors, and nearly got

caught after all, for on reaching the house they found that the magistrate with his watchmen and constables were already in possession.

They and their father, Richard Worthington, were closely questioned as to the whereabouts of Thomas Worthington the priest, the boys' uncle. He, as a matter of fact, was in the house when they entered, but managed to escape an hour after, before they had examined the bedrooms and the more retired parts of the house. Richard Worthington, indeed, kept them on purpose talking to him as long as he could.

So since they had not found the man they most wanted, they let the others go, principally on account of their respect for the noble lady, mistress of the house.

A day or two later the boys' father returned home to Blainscow, while Thomas Worthington with his three nephews, Thomas, Robert and John, made his way towards London.

On this journey they fell in with a false brother, who had betrayed them before, but whom they thought to be a good Catholic.

This man pretended to want to go abroad to a seminary, to make his studies, and on the journey did not scruple to approach the sacraments, a most sacrilegious crime for one in his state of conscience.

Since he was badly off, the others cheerfully paid his travelling expenses, but the ungrateful wretch betrayed their kindness by first stealing money of the boys and then betraying them to the notorious Topcliffe, and to Fleetwood, the recorder of London, who were armed by the Privy Council with a warrant for inflicting the cruellest torments on Catholic priests.

So on Sunday morning Thomas Worthington was taken at an inn in Islington, before he got up; and with him his nephew Thomas, Thomas Brown a priest, and Humphrey Maxfield a student of theology: they took the horses, too, and these were illegally retained by Topcliffe, "for the heretics steal the goods of private Catholics, just as they have stolen those of the Church."

The two other boys with two other Catholic young men managed to escape, though sought for with great diligence.

There was great jubilation over this capture. After their examination Brown and Maxfield were sent to the Clink, by order of the council, and Thomas Worthington the younger to the Gatehouse, where he passed the time most piously and steadfastly.

His uncle, after disputing all day long with the heretics, was sent to the Tower, where more than fifty gold pieces were stolen from him - a common occurrence enough in those lawless times, as may be seen from the life of Father George Haydock, the martyr, and many other examples. This money had been given to him by the most munificent Pope Gregory XIII, for his viaticum or travelling expenses the year before. The priest was thrown into a subterranean dungeon called Walesboure.

After six months' suffering he was sent into exile with twenty others, on 21 January 1585, without any charge having been brought against them, and without any trial. It was, of course, as he knew, for being a priest.

In July, 1584, Richard Worthington, who was still in confinement, hearing of the escape of his brothers, wrote to his mother, saying that he thought he could manage to escape too, if he knew of a faithful friend who could carry him off as he was on his way to school.

This letter fell into the hands of his keeper, the Dutchman, who, finding that it was of no use to try to prevent the lad, and that it was only labour lost, sent for a friend of his, who was a tenant of the boy's father, and said the lad could leave, which he did in a few days, only under sureties that he would not go abroad.

Notwithstanding this, however the boy set off with all speed for London, in order to get over to France with his brothers, who had escaped the danger which threatened them at Islington. And so in a month or two, after many hairbreadth escapes, they at last got away out of the snare of the fowler, and out of England.

They came then safely to Rheims, where they now gave themselves

up to study and piety in the English seminary erected there by the pope's liberality; so that, armed with these weapons, they might some day be able to do good service to God and the Church in building up the ruins of our Britain.

Here our old chronicle leaves the four boys, and we have to complete their lives by gathering together, as best we can, the scattered indications to be found in various contemporary documents.

The Douai diary informs us, first, that Robert Worthington arrived at Rheims with a Thomas Shelley (no doubt of the Michelgrove family) on 22 September 1584.

On October 13 the two younger boys, Richard and John, came safely to the college, where we may be sure they were welcomed with the honours that their constancy merited. But, alas! the brothers were soon to be parted, and that irrevocably. For less than two years later Richard, whose constitution no doubt had been undermined by his prolonged imprisonment and other sufferings, was taken from them by God to receive the reward of his labours. He was only sixteen, but in a short time he had fulfilled a long time, and his life's work had been well done. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God had perfected praise. He died 8 June 1586.

Nor was this brave little lad the only victim; he was preceded to the grave by his brother Robert, the hero of the escape that the old chronicle recounts so graphically; aged only 17, "he passed most sweetly to a happier life" on February 18 of the same year. We find this noted in the college diary by his uncle, Dr Thomas Worthington, for whose sake he had suffered so much.

Dr Worthington became, as is well known, president of the seminary at a later date; if we do not attempt to trace his subsequent career, it is because it belongs to the history of the persecuted English Church, and is too much mixed up with her fortunes to be unknown to any Catholic interested in her annals. We have therefore only to throw some light upon the later history of Thomas, the eldest boy, and little John who braved so courageously the wrath of the pseudo-prelate of Chester.

Thomas, it will be remembered, we left a prisoner in the Gatehouse. The Gatehouse was so called because it formed the western boundary of the *Domus Westmonastertensis* or Abbey of Westminster. There was no prison more full of Catholic prisoners than this, which was under the jurisdiction of the bishop of London; and it is probable that our young hero found more than one of his Lancashire friends and relatives in this dreary

A cousin of his, Father Lawrence Worthington, a Jesuit, (of whom more anon), was imprisoned here some years later, and he has left us a very graphic description of the place. The gaoler and his wife were grasping avaricious wretches who would do anything for a bribe, but who neglected most cruelly the unfortunate Catholics who were too poor to pay them the exorbitant prices they demanded. In those days a prisoner had to live at his own expense, and very heavy expenses they were, or starve. The martyr, Father Robert Southwell, S.J., found this to his cost; he was kept for months in a most filthy dark dungeon, covered with vermin and almost starving. It was a keeper of this prison indeed who, moved with pity at the miserable condition of his recusant prisoners, went to the so-called bishop of London, the cruel and bloodthirsty Aylmer, to beg him for an alms to provide them with some food.

"Let them fast on bread and water," said the worthy prelate.

"Water they can have, as the Thames is close by, but not a crust of bread will I give them without the money paid down," said the gaoler.

"Well, then," cried the bishop in a rage, "let them eat their own filth!"

And this was all that could be extracted from the charity of this eminent professor of the New Gospel.

Thomas Worthington, however, having well-to-do friends probably escaped the most terrible features of an imprisonment in Elizabethan days. Indeed, as we have hinted, his gaolers would allow him any favour if he had money to pay for it, and no doubt he often had the privilege of assisting at holy Mass which was constantly said by the priests imprisoned in the Gatehouse. Father

Lawrence, indeed, actually established there a little chapel, with an altar of the Blessed Virgin and silken hangings, and gave frequent sermons and instructions to the Catholics who were either his fellow-prisoners or came to visit their friends and gain spiritual consolations from the captive priests. He had even from time to time exposition of the Blessed Sacrament "in a crystal box or case shining with rays, though this was very seldom done 'for fear of the jews.'"

Thomas, then, was not without spiritual consolations we may well hope, and these, no doubt, contributed to keep him staunch and constant through the rigour of a long imprisonment. We find he was still in the Gatehouse in 1586, and the spy's report that mentions this fact, marks him, with others, among the staunchest and as "fit for Wisbeach."

Whether he was transferred or not to this gloomy and dark dungeon, which had been hallowed by the sufferings and death of the last bishop of Lincoln and the last abbot of Westminster, does not appear. We think it more probable that he obtained his release not long after this, and that then he slipped across to the continent to join his brothers. Alas, what a grief for him to find that the little band, that he had animated and sustained by his example, was reduced to one representative, and that he would never see again in this life his dear brothers, Robert and Richard!

What a sad meeting that must have been at Rheims, when Thomas and John embraced each other once more, and the youngest had to tell the story of the deathbeds of those brave brothers who had borne their trial so nobly!

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Part II

A long break in our attempt to gather up the record of these young lives occurs unfortunately at this point. The next time we meet with Thomas Worthington, he is a married man, and the father of a young family.

The exact date of his marriage has not been ascertained; but his wife was no other than Mary Allen, the youngest daughter of that brave lady, Elizabeth Allen, the cardinal's sister-in-law, who had suffered the loss of all her goods, and the hard pinch of poverty as an exile in a foreign land, since the day that her house at Rossall was despoiled by the enemy, and she and her daughters had much ado to escape the clutches of Elizabeth's myrmidons. The story will be found in these pages. The Allen children were, it will be remembered, old friends of the Worthingtons, and it might be thought that the germs of the future feeling that was to ripen into the love and union of marriage, were sown already in the young hearts of Thomas and Mary, as they shared a common peril in the retreat they had chosen at Warrington. But truth compels us to admit that Thomas Worthington was not the first object of his future wife's affection. In 1594, when she was about nineteen, she was betrothed to young Mr Thomas Throgmorton, a youth of great promise, though connected with a political party which was in direct antagonism to that of her uncle. We find, indeed, a letter of the cardinal's assuring his friends that the marriage of his niece to a member of "Paget's faction" would not in any way alter his own views, or detach him from the party which clung to the fortunes of Philip II, and looked to Spain (strange as it seems to us now, with our wisdom of after the event) for the restoration of the Catholic faith in England.

But the marriage, perhaps to the secret joy of many of the cardinal's friends, was never to take place. Young Throgmorton died in 1595, and it is between this date and that of 1597, that we must put the marriage of Thomas Worthington with Mary Allen. We are also left to conjecture as to the date when Mary Allen joined her friends abroad.

Be this as it may, the young pair met somewhere on the continent in 1596 or 1597, and were married. They settled down at Louvain, the hospitable university town that had sheltered the first Oxford exiles, and had been illustrated in return by the genius of Stapleton. Here, too, was the convent of Saint Ursula, a house of Augustinian canonesses, that had as its prioress the venerable Mother Margaret Clements, daughter of that brave woman Margaret Gygs, blessed Thomas More's adopted child, who, at the peril of her life, ministered food to the Carthusian monks when they were left to die of starvation in the Tower. The blessed martyrs had stood around this noble woman's deathbed, and had invited her to follow them to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Her daughter's life was a noteworthy one: it still exists in manuscript at the monastery of English canonesses at Bruges, a filiation from Saint Monica's, Louvain, which, as we shall see, the venerable mother was to found before her death.

Here in 1598, or thereabouts, was born to the young pair a daughter whom they named Anne. She was professed at Saint Monica's in 1615, so she must have seen the light at latest in 1599; and, as another daughter, Joanna, was born in that year, it is probable that Anne came into the world the year before, and so was the first-born child of the family. Joanna was baptized in 1599, at Saint Peter's, the splendid collegiate church which is still the glory of Louvain. Wilhelm was baptized at the same church in 1601, and other children followed. But we must pass on to an interesting episode in the quiet life of Thomas Worthington; it is one which shows him to us in a pleasant light as always. He had evidently lost none of the fervour and zeal for the faith and everything connected with it, that had distinguished his early years so brightly.

In 1609 (new style) upon Saint Scholastica's day, a little band of nuns, clad in their picturesque white habits with the linen rochet that marked them out as canonesses of Saint Augustine, might have been seen issuing from the convent gate of Saint Ursula's in the Mi-Rue, Louvain. This unwonted sight soon gathered a little crowd, who followed with devout curiosity the little procession.

There were only seven nuns, with a "veiled nun to help them in their household work." All were English, and they were on their

way to found a new convent, which was to be for the exclusive benefit of English ladies, unable to find a religious home in their own country.

The little procession culminated in the pathetic figure of the old mother, Margaret Clements, now quite blind; and she was led on the one side by "Mr Fenn," brother of the martyr, Venerable James Fenn, and chaplain of the nuns, and on the other by "Mr Worthington" - our friend Thomas.

But let us quote the naive and vivid words of the old convent chronicle: "They all went first to Saint Peter's church, to visit our Blessed Lady's picture of miracle there; for so the old mother had desired leave of the bishop they might do; and having heard mass again at Saint Peter's, which Father Fenn said, they thought to have come directly from thence to this house" (i.e. the new convent, Saint Monica's); "but Mr Worthington led them, without their knowledge, to his own house, where he had prepared for them a great dinner, such was his joy to receive nuns. They, on their side, were much amazed, thinking to have come to their own cloister when they saw themselves in his house, but there was no remedy. He had leave of the bishop, and they must do then as he would have them, for they knew not the way to their own monastery. There also met them the rector of the English College (Father Thomas Talbot, S.J.), who had brought with him two great tarts, the one of mincemeat made costly, the other of fruit very good. These two tarts Mrs Allen would not have touched there, for they had enough. She sent them beforehand to their own house, and indeed they served our poor sisters here a whole week. The said rector also gave to Sister Shirley a little piece of gold of half-a-crown for an alms to begin house withall, so they dined together there to the great content of Mrs Allen, her son and daughter."

It must be known that among the nuns was Mrs Allen's eldest surviving daughter, Catharine, a professed nun of Saint Ursula's, where the other daughter, Helen, had died a nun in 1603. Thomas Worthington was thus entertaining his: sister-in-law at his house. But to proceed -

"After dinner, about two or three of the clock in the afternoon, they came to this house, and the first thing they did was to dress the

altar in that little chapel which is in the gallery above, by the dormitories, and then their Reverend Father Fenn hallowed some water; which being done, they sang all together an antiphon of the Blessed Trinity, with the collect, etc. After this they went to settle in order their bedding and the things which they brought from Saint Ursula's, accommodating themselves in the rooms which they found, as was most convenient for a monastical life. Also Father Fenn and their servant, Roger, whom Sister Shirley had taken from Mr Worthington to serve our cloister, had their rooms apart, where he placed his library of books which were many."

The procuratrix had caused Mrs Allen to lay in a barrel of beer in the house beforehand, which she gave them, as also a batch of bread, such as we use now for common bread."

We must not enter into the interesting history of the early struggles of Saint Monica's, but it is impossible to help lingering over the charming picture which the good nun chronicler has traced for us here.

How well we can imagine the pride with which good Thomas Worthington ushered the bewildered nuns into his house, the glad welcome and hearty embraces of Mrs Allen and her married daughter, as they met again their dearly loved one for once without the tiresome barrier of the convent grate! Then "the great dinner," and the worthy Jesuit's tarts carried in with due solemnity during the meal, the pride with which the young wife would do the honours of her house to her elder sister, the earnest talk, half sad, half merry, over old days in Lancashire, when Father Campion preached those never-to-be-forgotten sermons at Blainscow Hall, and the children played together in the Rossall woods.

Round the table, too, would be one or two high chairs, whose little occupants stared open-mouthed at the unwonted guests. There was little Anne, and perhaps baby Mary, both of whom were to knock one day for admission at the convent gate. There was Richard too, destined to be a priest, and to win golden opinions from his fellow-students of the English College at Rome.

Truly a goodly company, and doubtless a merry one, in spite of the sufferings that most of its members had had to endure for the old

faith that had made England "merry." There were near relatives of martyrs in the little group, but surely it was more of thankfulness than sorrow that fell on Sister Garnet's spirit at the thought of the gallows raised at old Saint Paul's, and the sacred blood that splashed the straw hardly three years back. And in the peace of their Louvain life, perhaps even Mrs Allen hardly regretted much the dear old Hall at Rossall, where two masses were said daily during the very fiercest period of the persecution. Well, they had suffered, all of them, but it was for Christ and His Church, and surely martyred forms looked down on them in love and blessing from on high, and Robert and Richard who had shared with their elder brother the burden and heat of the day, now, perchance, in their blessed home in paradise, were not strangers to that scene in the humble house at Louvain.

It is disappointing to be able to add so little of the subsequent career of the Worthington family. In 1612, three years later, Mary Worthington claimed the estates of her brother, John Allen deceased. Catharine died in her monastic home this year, so Mary was the sole heiress of the property. There is a mystery about the date of John Allen's death, as the "Inquisitio post mortem," made in 1612 by seven gentlemen of Wigan, states that he died "apud Preston in Amounderness, June 23, in 35th year of the Queen (1593)." Since then the yearly rents and profits had been paid to the crown (the gentlemen of Wigan are unable to suggest any reason for this arrangement, though Secretary Cecil may have been better informed). But, on the other hand, the unimpeachable authority of the second Douai Diary, | confirmed by an autograph note of Dr Worthington himself, makes us certain that the Widow Allen's only son died on the Nativity of Saint John Baptist, 24 June 1585.

It looks as if during these nine years some pretender had lain concealed near Preston, claiming to be the rightful lord of the estates. Was it some faithful servant of the family, a foster brother maybe of the banished squire, who, with the connivance of the tenants, personated his dead master in order to convey the rents to the outlawed family?

Be this as it may, it is certain that from 1593 the crown enjoyed the revenues of the Allen property, and we do not learn that Mary

Worthington was successful in getting back her own. The full text of the "Inquisitio," giving a detailed description of the various properties, is to be found in the "Letters and Memorials of Cardinal Allen," from which valuable compilation we have gleaned many details of this story.

As to the rest of Thomas Worthington's life, we-only know that he died in 1619. We have not ascertained the date of his wife's death.

There is still one thread of the skein to gather up: the life, that is, of the youngest brother, John Worthington, who so bravely withstood the wiles and the threats of the bishop of Chester. There is a difficulty about his story, as the contemporary Jesuit historian, Father Henry More, gives him a brother Lawrence, who, by the dates given, would be a year younger than he. The chronicle, on the other hand, always speaks of him as the youngest boy; and Father Persons, in a well known letter to Father Agazzari, says our four boys were the four youngest of Mr Worthington's twelve children. But, as Father More gives the history of the youngest boy as that of Father John Worthington, S.J., we think it is more probable that he is only mistaken in making Father Lawrence his brother. He was very likely a cousin. If this is thought improbable, and Father More must have known both fathers, we can only suggest that Father Persons has made a mistake, and that little John had still a younger brother. Anyhow, we do not think we shall go far wrong if we relate briefly the career of Father John Worthington of the Society of Jesus.

John, as we have seen, reached Rheims safely on 13 October 1584. In 1586, a few months after his brother Richard's death, the lad, then fourteen years old, was sent to Father Person's new school for humanities at Eu, near Treport, in Normandy. This establishment did not flourish very long, and was afterwards transferred to Saint Omer, where it became very famous; but at this period we constantly find that the younger students were sent from Rheims to Eu "to learn grammar."

In March, 1589, he returned to Rheims to study logic. He was a remarkably quick and clever boy, with a precocious talent for oratory, and he speedily attracted the notice of his superiors.

Bishop Yepes gives us an interesting account of the part played by John Worthington at the visit made by the king of Spain to the English seminary at Valladolid on 3 August 1592. His account leaves no room for doubt of the identity of this John Worthington with the youngest of our four heroes.

King Philip II, having decided to visit the college, founded in large part by his own royal bounty, chose the feast of the Discovery of the protomartyr Saint Stephen's relics as a fitting day to visit a college dedicated to the proto-martyr of England, Saint Alban, and itself the nursing mother of many future martyrs. He came to the college about half-past four in the afternoon, accompanied by his daughters and a large suite, and was received at the door of the college by Father Persons, the founder, with the whole body of professors and students.

Bishop Yepes, who was doubtless one of the visitors, tells us that the king and his court much admired the modest and ingenuous aspect of these young men, who had given up all the world holds dear to win England back to the faith.

The royal visitors were at once conducted to the chapel, which had been suitably hung with brocade and spread with rich carpets, where they remained some time in fervent prayer. Father Persons then gave a short address, in which he explained the origin and object of the college dedicated to the proto-martyr who had suffered, as so many were at that very moment suffering in England, for the crime of showing hospitality to a priest of God.

The king and his attendants then passed into the great hall of the college to a large dais which had been arranged for his majesty, the students being drawn up in two ranks on either side of the hall. After a few gracious words from his Catholic majesty, the Father Rector begged the royal permission for a student to pronounce a Latin discourse of welcome in the name of the rest.

The young orator, whose peculiarly modest and graceful appearance made a great impression on the audience, was no other than our friend John. Readiness of speech had always been one of his gifts, and he now pronounced, with singular elegance and ease, a long Latin address, in which he welcomed his majesty and the

princesses to the college, and expressed the thanks of English Catholics, and of the students in particular, for the numerous benefits showered on the seminary by the royal bounty.

We are not going to weary our readers with the speech (though Bishop Yepes thought it worth translating into Spanish), for it is passing long, and is, after all, a mere graceful expression of thanks for past favours and hopes for future ones.

He compares the king to Abdias, who, during the persecution of Achab, hid God's prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water; and to Cyrus, the chosen instrument of God in restoring His people to their ancient home. For this end doubtless He had discovered to him the hidden treasures of the Indies, for this had humbled before him so many powerful princes. In return he offered to the king the hearts, the service and the life of himself, his companions and his friends.

At the end of his discourse the young orator advanced to kiss his majesty's hand, but the king, rising, embraced him with much affection. The 71st Psalm, *Deus judicium tuum regi da*, was then recited by the students in ten different languages, beginning with Hebrew, and other speeches followed; at all of which the king and court appeared greatly pleased, and they did not depart before his majesty had embraced, in the most tender and affectionate manner, all the students of the college.

Father Persons, seeing he was likely to turn out a brilliant subject, sent him with another student to found an English college at Seville. "Having prepared a short Latin address, which was heightened by the eloquence of its delivery, in which they made known the causes of their exile and their plan of studies, they gathered on their whole journey much compassion and applause from the bishops and abbots."

On the feast of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, 1592, after solemn High Mass, sung by the bishop of Seville, John Worthington having asked the bishop's blessing, ascended the pulpit and delivered a Latin oration of an hour's length. The function being over, both he and his companion, on their knees before the altar, pronounced with a loud voice the form of oath prescribed by Father Persons at

the English College, Rome, the nature and utility of which the other student afterwards explained in Spanish to the assembled people.

The college at Seville was dedicated to Saint Gregory; it never became very flourishing or illustrious like that of Valladolid, and was united to that famous seminary by Bishop Challoner in 1767.

John Worthington, however, left Seville in 1597, and accompanied Father Persons to Rome. He was now twenty-five years old. The English College diary says he was admitted there on April 14 "to finish his studies in theology," which looks as if he were not yet a priest. On the day before he entered the college he made a Latin oration before Pope Clement VIII, and was much applauded. Father More says he was ordained priest in Rome before entering the Society, which he did 27 October 1598; but Brother Foley, for various reasons, doubts the accuracy of this statement.

In any case, after his novitiate at Saint Andrew's on the Quirinal, the house that had been for ever embalmed thirty years before by the virtues of the angelic Stanislaus, he spent a year or two at the Roman college; here he may have assisted at the first translation of the relics of that young Jesuit student who had died there six years before, and whose name is venerated now throughout the world as the patron and the pattern of youth. On leaving the Eternal City he went back again to Spain, where he became father minister at the English seminary in Valladolid.

In 1604 his health broke down, owing to the unwholesomeness of the climate, and he was sent to the English mission.

There are several of our martyrs who owe their crown to a sickness which made their doctors despair of their being cured away from their native air. It was, indeed, a desperate remedy in those days of persecution, and a sick priest might find the air of the Tower or the Marshalsea little more wholesome than that of Rome or Valladolid; but was it not the very danger of arrest and of cruel sufferings that made the patient long so earnestly to be sent back to his native soil? Among the priests of that day, both secular and religious, there was an eager emulation, a constant loving contest, to win the martyr's palm.

When the danger was thickest, then it was that the Douay students were most persistent in their entreaties to be sent into England. Then it was that young men, generous souls who feared not death, longed most ardently for the sublime grace of the priesthood.

And we cannot doubt that it was with an exulting joy that John Worthington, who had proved so steadfast from his early boyhood, heard the physician's opinion that the English air was necessary for his health.

He was not, indeed, to be rewarded with the martyr's crown; but he was to die in bonds, a valiant confessor of Jesus Christ. No sooner did he set his foot on English soil, after the long exile of twenty years, than he found work ready for his hands. The conversion of an unhappy man who was what was then called a "Schismatic," i.e. a Catholic who attended Protestant worship in order to preserve his estates, was the first triumph of his apostolate.

He was the first to introduce the Society of Jesus into his own Lancashire, that most faithful county where the Catholic faith has ever been strongest, and where the society was to reckon more than one glorious martyr. Jesuits, indeed, like blessed Edmund Campion, had visited Lancashire before, but John Worthington was the first to make his abode there. His splendid oratorical powers, and still more, perhaps, the discretion and the care with which he prepared his penitents for the sacraments and initiated them into the exercises of Saint Ignatius, soon gave him a great renown among the fervent Catholics of that district, and his aid was sought from far and wide.

For twenty years he held the office of superior of the society in this district, or, according to the technical title in vogue, that of "rector of the college of Saint Aloysius," the saint in whose footsteps he had trod so closely at the Roman college in bye-gone years. He was sent as procurator to Rome in 1632-33, being now sixty years old; and his prudence and sweetness of manners won all hearts in the Eternal City.

But after his return home, after some few years passed in peace, a greater trial than any he had yet endured fell to his lot.

In his seventy-first year, 1643, John Worthington fell into the hands of the parliamentary troops, who were in open rebellion against that ill-starred monarch, Charles I.

His captivity lasted till 1648, when it pleased God to release him from his bonds in his seventy-sixth year (not in his seventieth, as Brother Foley says). He had spent fifty years in religion; and if, as Saint Bernard tells us, the religious life is a slow martyrdom, surely his was truly a martyr's lot, crowned as it was by a death in bonds and imprisonment for the gospel. It was a glorious death, worthy of the noble career that had begun so brightly in Lancashire when he was a boy of but twelve years old. We can faintly imagine something of the joy of that blessed meeting when the four brothers who had suffered so bravely together in their boyhood, but whose subsequent careers had been so different, were once more united never to part in the unspeakable joys of that Vision which no human heart can conceive nor human tongue declare.

He died on the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul; truly it was a fitting day for such a one to go to God, loaded as he was with the trophies of a long and fruitful apostleship.

It is only right that we should add some details as to the last imprisonment of this man of God - details which have the highest possible authority, for they are taken from a long letter which he himself addressed to his provincial, Father Edward Knott.

He tells how his house was ransacked by the Puritan soldiers in the dead of night; how he had to fly for his life to a coal-shed, and stand shivering there, half-clothed, till three o'clock in the morning (it will be remembered he was seventy years of age), when he ventured back to the house, only to be put to flight again by a second search party under the direction of "some Judas." The soldiers rushing into the room found the bed warm, and shouted: "The priest, the priest, that old fox! We will have him unless he hide in the earth; we will burn him alive."

The enemy even brought up a cannon to demolish the house; but at the first attempt to fire it, it burst, and so at last they beat a retreat. The father then returned to the house, and hid his papers and church-stuff.

"A few days of tranquillity followed, but this was not for long. It was a Sunday, and after our religious duties we were taking some refectation, and had hardly sat down to table when a soldier at the window bawls out a decree of parliament bidding us quit the house, which was to be seized for the use of the parliament." After a slight resistance the family naturally had to give way, and were allowed to keep part of the house on condition of paying to the soldiers three hundred florins and delivering up all their arms and ammunition. "The soldiers took possession of the house, and all the entrances were guarded that none might escape. I concealed myself that night; and the following day they searched the house from top to bottom. I still lay hid, which was to little purpose, in the chamber occupied by your reverence on your visitation, only the door of it was hid by a cupboard placed against it. The soldiers were close by, keeping up an uproar; and as the walls were covered with handsome wainscot, they broke in almost every panel, that nothing might escape them. Having finished the search and made a meal, the colonel and the captain departed, leaving a strong body to guard the house. When these were gone, I thought it best to come out and commit myself to the care of divine Providence, and take my chance with the rest. So I left my hiding-place and joined the community unobserved, and for two days was not suspected; but the traitor was on me before I could, as I had intended, effect my escape."

It would be interesting to know where the house that sheltered Father Worthington was situated, but we have no clue to identify the place. His narrative goes on to tell us how he was betrayed by the "Judas" ("false brethren" were, alas, too common in those sad days - we have had an instance already in this story), and brought before the colonel, who urged him, as he valued his life, to hand over his concealed treasures and renounce his order. "To the first I replied that there were no treasures; and as to the second, I was not the kind of man he took me for" (no, indeed, he little knew John Worthington!) "but were I so, that no man could without disgrace renounce his duties and apostatize. A soldier was then set guard over me, and so I was made a public show. And the next day a huge crowd of people of all kinds came to see the place which had been taken, and what sort of monster I was. . . . Some of the baser sort came to me and treated me with much indignity and insult. One

would put down his head and ask me to absolve him from his sins; another would put some question in joke to get an answer; a third would bring out a cart-load of lies against religion from Protestant books. One says, 'I'll take thee to London to the parliament to be hanged;' another, 'We'll put thee on a horse, and jolt thee well, and tie thy legs under his belly to keep thee on, and drive him with whip and spur to teach thee to ride;' and abundance of such like besides.

"Meanwhile others are venting their rage on some holy picture which they had found hid. Several of the Blessed Virgin, and Saint Ignatius, and Saint Francis Xavier they burned, and of other saints. . . . But to complete their impiety they brought out a crucifix, which I had procured some forty years ago, well and beautifully carved, and, because I had used it so long, and it was so full of moving devotion, I valued it much. This they exposed in the midst of the court, not for holy reverence, but for the mockery of the blinded people, and as an object for daily and hourly insult. This scene of mockery lasted ten whole days, so that I was never alone even at night, for my guard was always laid beside me, and I was thrust into the vilest closet in the house. . . . When the riot had lasted long enough, an order comes that I should be taken to the next town, four Roman miles distant. . . . the cavalcade thither was not without its solemnity. The whole of the way they carried before me the image of our Lord Jesus crucified. I rode upon a sorry beast without boots or spurs, but still I kept giving it my heels with such continual motion that it must have been evident to all that I was not only content, but full of joy in following so nearly my Lord and Master on the crucifix.

"Ten armed soldiers guarded me round, and so I entered the full market-place about mid-day; the first who carried the crucifix cried several times aloud: 'Here is the god of the Papists!' The poor wretch thought that the people would shout and applaud, but quite the contrary. Only one woman was heard to say anything insulting, and she was quickly stopped by many, who cried 'Shame.' And, indeed, along the whole way and in the town, men stood astonished, and gazed in silence on the spectacle." After this mock procession the good father was taken to the colonel, who pretended he knew him and had seen him among the Jesuits at Ghent three

years before, though he had not been out of England for ten years. He was again baited by the mob, and spent some days in skirmishing with heretical ministers, who were "a poor set of antagonists" and did not give him much trouble to vanquish. He must have been consoled in the mockery he had to endure, not only by the thought of his Lord and Master, but also by the remembrance of the very similar treatment which Blessed Edmund Campion, to whom he owed so much, had had to endure after his capture. It will be remembered how that blessed martyr was led in mock triumph into London on a market day, tied on a sorry hack, with the inscription over his head, "This is Campion, the seditious Jesuit."

The little boy who had once sat at Father Campion's feet and drunk in those burning words which fell from his lips, was to follow very closely in the footsteps of his spiritual father; and it was surely a bright jewel in the martyr's crown to have formed so steadfast a confessor as John Worthington!

He was taken after some days to Stafford, a journey of two or three days, where he was more kindly treated by the commander-in-chief of the district. But even here he was in the closest confinement and under the very strictest surveillance. "No books, much less any sacred ones, and endless suspicions," is his own summing-up of the situation. But as he adds himself, his courage did not abate - nay, in this state of solitude and weary imprisonment he was never more full of peace. Not even in his novitiate in that holy house of Saint Andrew on the Quirinal did he enjoy greater happiness or feel more sensible consolation from heaven.

An attempt was made to exchange him for one of the parliamentary captains taken by Prince Rupert, but it fell through owing to the malevolence of the colonel who pretended to have seen him at Ghent, and who was his chief enemy. Indeed, the old man's cheerfulness and courage seem to have won all hearts, and as of old in the bishop of Chester's palace, so here, he was a general favourite with his gaolers.

At last he was brought to trial before the parliamentary commissioners, and in a most spirited defence, in spite of his fatigue after a long journey without food or sleep, was able to put his accuser to open shame. But his innocence availed him little; the

cupidity of the commander-in-chief was aroused by hearing a report that he was a bishop or a cardinal, and he resolved to keep him in strict custody in the hopes of gaining a rich ransom for him.

One morning, just after midnight, he was aroused from bed by an armed band, and had to stand shivering in his nightshirt while the soldiers searched the room for papers. But, fortunately, they found nothing. In spite of this they tried to suborn witnesses to swear he was a priest (in which case his life was forfeit), but without much success.

Meanwhile the poor old man fell violently ill, and the treatment of the regimental apothecary nearly finished him off. He had been prisoner now for two years and some months.

The commander, however, who had always been favourably disposed to him, now interfered in his favour and got him a good servant, by whose means he was able to procure "a book, with the necessary stuff for use," i.e., a missal and all that was necessary for saying Mass, a great joy to him after his long privation of all sacramental sources of grace.

He was taken later on by the commander to his own house in the country, where he was allowed to go out from time to time on parole: opportunities which he utilized in visiting and ministering to the Catholics of the neighbourhood. He never reached the goal of his desires - the halter and the knife, as we have already said - but died, as our forefathers used to put it, a martyr *in vinculis*.

Father Tanner says he might have gained his freedom if he would have taken the oath of allegiance prescribed by parliament, an oath so blasphemous and execrable that he declared he would rather be slain by a thousand deaths and torn in pieces by the rack than in the slightest point admit or allow it.

It would have been indeed open apostasy to take this oath, which not only rejected the papal supremacy but denied transubstantiation, purgatory, and other Catholic doctrines.

It was certainly useless to offer such an oath to a man like this aged priest who, when a mere boy of twelve years old, had submitted

cheerfully to stripes and imprisonment rather than enter even for one moment an heretical place of worship.

And so the martyr's trophy is complete, and round the throne of Blessed Campion in heaven is gathered, as we trust, this little band of brothers who, fired by his words and encouraged by his example, set their faces like a flint against the wickedness of the times in which they lived, and in boyhood as in manhood preferred to die rather than be defiled.

The Ladies of Rossall Hall

It was Christmas-time, the season of peace and good-will, but in the old manor-house of Rossall there were deadly anxieties, fears and searchings of heart. For it was the Christmas of 1583, and that year like the two preceding ones had been full of sorrow and suffering for English Catholics. Hitherto, however, the faithful Lancashire folk had managed to escape from many of the perils to which their brethren were daily and hourly exposed in Yorkshire, not to speak of London and the south. But now the war had been carried into their midst, and every day brought its news of outrage and plunder, every night its terrors and alarms. One day came the news of a savage search in the town of Prescott; it had been invaded by armed men, and the Catholics spoiled of their goods and carried off to prison. On another day came the rumour of the search at Mr Lathom's of Mosborough. The trembling household at Rossall heard of the cruel surprise in the midst of the merry Christmas festivities, how the pursuivants with the riff-raff of Manchester at their heels had burst into their old friend's house, torn down the panelling, thrust their swords through the tapestry, rifled every chest and coffer, and had not even shrunk from brutally insulting the mistress of the house, whose dress they had torn open to see if an Agnus Dei or sacred relic were perchance concealed beneath. Before they finally took their leave they had put seals on doors and coffers as if everything - were confiscated to the crown and would be disposed of by the council according to its will and pleasure.

And if the family at Mosborough had suffered so greatly, how could the family at Rossall hope to escape! Indeed were they not rather sure of meeting with even worse treatment on account of their connexion with the man who was the special object of Protestant hate? For the lady of Rossall was no other than Elizabeth, widow of George Allen, the elder brother of the famous Dr Allen, founder of the English colleges at Douai and Rome. The future cardinal was safe from his enemies' clutches, but their vengeance would fall all the more fiercely on the defenceless widow and her children.

She had been left a widow in 1579 with a son, John, then a boy of fifteen, and three daughters, Helen, Catharine and Mary. John had

been sent for safety abroad, where, however, he was soon to find an early death, and the widow and her daughters remained quietly at Rossall. Mrs Allen was a brave woman, worthy of her family, and never for a moment did she shrink from braving all the penalties heaped upon recusants, especially those who dared to harbour priests. Although it meant death to have a priest found in the house; she none the less sheltered God's ministers with joy, receiving them as angels of God. Never was there less than one priest at Rossall, and it was a common thing for three Masses to be said in the little secret chapel in the roof long before the dawn of day. On the anniversary of her husband's death (August 9) the pious widow had twelve priests gathered together under her roof, so anxious was she to secure holy Masses for the soul of the departed. Nor was she less prudent than she was pious and courageous. Anticipating the evil day, she had carefully given over £500 in gold which her husband had left for the dowry of his daughters into the hands of a steward named William Anyon, so that if she was robbed of her lands there might be at least some provision left for her children.

Mrs Allen is described in a document of the time as "an obstinate person, refusing to come to the church," and her obstinacy was now to be punished with an amount of severity and injustice remarkable even in those days of persecution.

Among her most powerful enemies the poor lady had to reckon two of her neighbours, Edmund Fleetwood, Esquire, who already looked on Rossall as his lawful inheritance, and Edward Trafford, Esquire, who, though ancestor of a noble Catholic family, was himself a bitter enemy of the old religion, and being a man of but small fortune and position hoped to gain knighthood and wealth through the misfortunes of his neighbours. This gentleman had been appointed high sheriff of the county in November of this year, and the Catholics knew that this nomination boded ill to their peace. The lady of Rossall Hall was to be one of the first to suffer from the persecuting fury of the new sheriff. She had been indicted and outlawed as an obstinate recusant in September, and from that time must have known that her ruin was only a matter of time.

And now the time of trial had come. Mrs Allen and her daughters, as they sat round their Yule-tide fire, heard, as we have seen, many

rumours of the coming storm. But even more than for themselves they feared for the priest who lay hid within the hall. The worst that could happen to them probably would be imprisonment and poverty; but their chaplain, Mr Bromley, if caught by the pursuivants, could look for nothing better than a traitor's fearful death. Their aunt Coniers too, who was staying with them for Christmas, would surely be frightened to death by the violence of the rabble, to say nothing of their cousin, Mistress Aloysia Haydock, who was seriously ill, and whom it might be dangerous to move.

Mrs Allen hardly knew what was the best course to take, but she decided not to sleep at home, but to retire every evening to a secure hiding-place which she had made some little way off. In the morning she came home and assisted at Mass, but returned to her refuge as evening drew in. The holy sacrifice was the poor woman's only comfort in this hour of trial; by daily feeding on the bread of angels she strengthened her soul for the coming conflict, for she never knew what the day might bring forth to try her courage and her faith. Christmas was, as well may be guessed, hardly so merry a time this year at Rossall Hall as it had been in the good old days. Still, the little party did their best to keep up the time-honoured festivities of the holy season and to cheer each other in the common anxiety.

At last the long-dreaded news came. Rossall Hall was to be attacked on the eve of the Epiphany. A friendly warning was conveyed to the widow. She would have for once to do without holy Mass, for was it not too great a risk? But, then, there was that poor man whom the chaplain had just succeeded in reconciling to the Church. He had not received his Lord for twenty years. Could she deprive him of this grace just as the hour of trial approached? The lady of Rossall decided that she could not. So watchers were set at various points of vantage to guard the house and give notice of the approach of the foe. Holy Mass was said at an early hour, and the little band of the faithful partook of the food of the strong. All day long the watchers were on the alert, but the foe did not appear. As evening drew on Mrs Allen and Mrs Coniers retired to the hiding-place. The priest, too, was securely hidden.

The three little girls remained at home, for they were the owners of the property, both by her husband's will and by a deed of gift which she had had drawn up by a lawyer. They were not outlawed, and so could not be touched by the pursuivants, and it was hoped that their presence in the house would prevent those gentry from indulging in their usual acts of robbery.

At nightfall a man came to the door, who pretended to be the bearer of a message from some Catholic friends of the family. He was kindly received and given lodgings for the night; but he was in reality the sheriff's spy, and he repaid the hospitality shown him by stealing out of bed and searching every corner of the house during the night, in the hopes of finding the whereabouts of Mrs Allen.

Next day, however, the feast of the Epiphany, the storm burst. Early in the morning those on the look-out reported that an armed band was making for the hall, headed by the deputy-sheriff and a county magistrate named Huddleston. This man was a very bitter Protestant, and he brought at his heels a band of ruffians, fresh from the plunder of other Catholic houses. The servants at the door were instructed to demand to see their warrant before they admitted them, but it was labour lost, for the invaders broke in by force.

The principal objects of their search were, of course, Mrs Allen and the priest, but they were also anxious to lay hands on Mrs Coniers. They searched everywhere and questioned everyone but all to no purpose; and the servants refused to take an oath to answer every question put to them, although the enemy tried their best to make them do so. The spy, however, was very officious, and came forward to take the oath; and he had the temerity to swear that Mrs Allen was hidden somewhere in the house, and that he himself had been locked up all night in a bedroom. lest he should discover her retreat. But here he was confronted by the sturdy yeoman, William Anyon of Chirkbridge, who had been his chamber companion that night, and who now gave him the lie to his face.

The pursuivants, tired of questions that found no answer, next proceeded to the dining hall, where they found a portrait of Dr Allen, which they flew upon with unholy glee, and soon reduced to a wreck. Not content with mutilating it with daggers and fists, they

cut it out of the frame and trampled it under foot, all the time belching out the most horrid insults against the good doctor.

The house was searched from garret to cellar, and, though nothing of much value was to be found, they laid hands on everything that took their fancy - not even sparing the young ladies' dresses, which they carried off and distributed among their female friends.

Mrs Allen, meanwhile, had not been idle. Hearing what was going on in her house, she conceived a notable plan to rid herself of these unwelcome visitors as quickly as possible. They would, she knew, stay there as long as they could find anything to eat and drink; so it was obviously expedient to consume the provisions in the house as quickly as possible. There was no village or town near where more could easily be got, so that when all was gone they would have to go too. So she sent some seven and twenty rustics, who were devoted dependants of the family, up to the hall that evening, charging them to join themselves to the enemy and help them to eat and drink all that the house provided. But these rustics made such a formidable appearance when they arrived, armed as they were with clubs and sticks, that the sheriff's party were quite terrified. That worthy official, in fact, rose quickly from the table and with pallid cheeks and trembling voice proposed an instant flight. These preparations were quickened by the shouts raised by the peasants, which were blood-curdling enough, no doubt, to the ears of evil-doers. But here the servants interfered. They knew it would do their mistress's cause no good if it was reported that she had shown armed resistance to the authorities, and so they began to assure the frightened officers that they had nothing to fear from these good rustics, who only came to pay a twelfth day visit to their lady, according to time-honoured custom. So the deputy-sheriff and his friends were, though with some difficulty, induced to return to their supper, and food and drink was served out to the worthy rustics in great abundance.

About eight o'clock at night the officer regained courage enough to order these good men to begone - he had discovered by this time that they were not in such strong force as his own band - lest, as he said, they should disturb the slumbers of the queen's officers, who for the past twelve nights had been so occupied in searching

gentlemen's houses that they had had no time to sleep - a pretty way to keep the season of peace and good-will forsooth!. The rustics thereupon departed with the exception of seven who decided to remain as a body-guard for their young mistresses. But these brigands, waxing bolder, fell on these faithful seven, and threatened to send them to Lancaster gaol unless they went off at once. And they did not let them go till they had bound them over to appear at the next assizes to answer for their conduct; although the only charge they could bring against them was that they had not gone when they were first told, and that one young man had brought out a pack of cards and invited his comrades to play. As a matter of fact, not only these seven, but all the band of peasants were summoned to the assizes and had to pay a fine of seventeen shillings each, no small sum for men of their condition, besides their expenses and the loss of a day's work. But these "griffins" think more of money than of justice!

Next day the officer, who had determined to spend some time in the house, sent ten of his brigands to Manchester. On their way they met one of the numerous informers who abounded in the country, and he, hoping to curry favour with the authorities, told them that he had seen Mrs Allen the Saturday evening before in the house of William Anyon. With renewed hopes they hastened thither, hoping to find the lady, or at least some of their belongings, and alas! the hope was too well founded. For after a frantic search all over the house they found hidden in a flour-bin the £500 in gold which Mrs Allen had entrusted to this good man on behalf of her daughters, as we have already said. There was also a quantity of linen. All this plunder was carried off with shouts of triumph and handed over to the deputy-sheriff, who received it with no less joy and sent it at once to his superior at Manchester. But these brigands, fearing not to get a share of the plunder, took care to reduce it on the way by some £48. This was proved later on, when sheriff Trafford was made to produce his accounts, and it was found he had only received £452. Thus the smaller thieves copied their masters - and no wonder! They were not content even with this, for they extracted £5 more from the unlucky Anyon, and then trampled all the flour under foot so that it was rendered quite useless. The poor man could get no redress for this outrage, though he appealed to the magistrates.

It was now the sheriff's object to try to prove that this money did not belong to its true owners, Mrs Allen's young daughters; for in that case he would not have to give it up. He therefore ordered that two of the head servants should be sent to him, and on their arrival he threw them into a dark and filthy dungeon, and after twenty-four hours' incarceration he threatened them with all kinds of torments if they would not confess that Mrs Allen hid this money because she intended to send it to her kinsman Dr Allen at Rheims. But these faithful servants stoutly protested that nothing should make them confess what they did not know. Anyon was also put on oath, and he swore that the money belonged to the young heiresses of Rossall. But the sheriff would not accept his testimony, and did his best to make the good man commit perjury.

Mistress Haydock was treated no better by these miscreants. At first they had shown some slight consideration for her infirmities, and had agreed to let her be taken to the house of a friendly neighbour, but before long their furious fanaticism was aroused by hearing this brave Christian virgin pray aloud for his holiness the pope. She could not help making this public protest when she heard their impious and continual blasphemies against the sacred person of Christ's vicar; and it made them so furious that they threatened to carry her off at once to prison, in spite of all their promises and the entreaties of her friends, if she refused at once to utter imprecations against his holiness and beg pardon from the queen (their pope) for the horrid offence of praying for the pope of Rome. The noble maiden, far from yielding to their impious demands, prayed all the more zealously, aloud, in their presence, for the Roman pontiff and for all Catholic priests under his jurisdiction, and said she would do so as long as she lived. So she was carried off to prison - truly a worthy companion of the blessed Agnes and Cicely, who were not afraid to profess the faith in spite of threatening and torture. Worthy too to be the sister of that glorious martyr whose pride and consolation it was to write up in large letters on the walls of his prison cell - "Gregory XIII, supreme head of the whole Catholic Church."

All this time, as may well be imagined, Mrs Allen was in great distress and anguish of mind about her daughters, who were thus left at the mercy of these ravening wolves. She did not know what

to do or how to help them except by her prayers. But the girls meanwhile like "wise virgins" were determining themselves on a course of action. They knew how dangerous it would be for them to be carried off by the queen's officers, and so as this was daily threatened they determined to take the first opportunity of escaping from the house. As a matter of fact they ran great danger of being foiled in this plan, for the officer in charge, on leaving Rossall Hall on January 10, commanded some of his myrmidons to take the young ladies as soon as possible to the sheriffs house. But these men were in no hurry to quit their comfortable quarters, and so delayed on one pretext or another for some days. This gave the girls the opportunity they sought for. The first thing to do was to hide the keys of the door so that they could not be locked at night. That accomplished, it was easy to steal downstairs at dead of night, remove the bar, push back the bolts from the massive house door, and slip out into the darkness. They quickly found their way to the sea coast, where they providentially found a boat ready to cross the mouth of the river Wyre; and safely landed on the other side they wandered by out of the way paths, hardly daring to trust themselves in any house, till at last after a whole fortnight's suspense they were happily united to their mother once more. As we saw, they were hidden at Warrington under charge of an uncle when Blainscow Hall was searched on February 12. A strange experience for tenderly nurtured girls!

The poor widow's one thought was how to preserve at least some remnants of her children's inheritance. But, alas! she found herself deserted in her extremity by the very friends on whose assistance she most relied, and whom she had made trustees of the property. They were afraid of getting into trouble if they interfered on her behalf, and said they would wait and see what decision the law would come to in the matter; in a word, they would prove themselves friends when friends were no longer needed. But nevertheless God raised up for her in her dire need some friends more worthy of that name. These gentlemen went to the sheriff and warned him not to act in this matter contrary to law and justice, for the property belonged not to the mother but to her daughters, as they were able to prove; and it, therefore, could not be legally confiscated. So the sheriff was compelled to bring the matter before a jury.

The case came on at Manchester, January 24; and although Mrs Allen was pressed to let her daughters appear to plead their own cause, she most prudently refused, knowing that if they once fell into the hands of the heretics they would in all probability be ordered to take the oath of supremacy, and on their refusal would be thrown into prison and spoiled of their patrimony. So she named as their representatives six gentlemen of family, and also sent four men of decent condition who had been witnesses to the deed of gift by which she made over the property to her children.

But no justice was to be done that day at Manchester. The sheriff began by naming Edmund Fleetwood foreman of the jury. Now Fleetwood was Mrs Allen's great enemy, who claimed her house and grounds on the pretence that it belonged to the monastic Grange of Rossall, and that his father had bought all that property from Henry VIII at the dissolution of the monasteries. Rossall had been, in fact, a grange belonging to the abbey of Dieulacres, a Cistercian house in the county of Stafford; but, as Fleetwood well knew, the last abbot of that house had transferred this property to his kinsman, John Allen, on a long lease, and this lease had not yet expired by some years. Of course Fleetwood had only purchased the reversion of the lease. However, he was anxious to enter into possession of these ill-gotten goods, and did not hesitate to spoil the widow and the orphan. He had twenty-three others of a like stamp associated with him on the jury, for this sort of juries consist of twenty-four members; and not all the protests of Mrs Allen's friends could do anything to ensure a fair hearing or an unprejudiced jury. They challenged Fleetwood's name especially, but all to no purpose.

Almost in despair, but determined to fight it out till the last, they produced the deed of gift; but their witnesses were not even allowed to give evidence, on the astonishing plea that they had come to favour Papists and traitors against the queen's majesty. Nor could they procure possession of the title deeds of a farm called Toderstaff, or Tatterstaffe, which had been left to the younger girls by their late uncle, Mr Richard Allen. These deeds had been stolen from Rossall Hall during the late invasion. The sheriff calmly declared that the queen's enemies had no rights.

In short, the jury having retired for a decent interval, during which

they were visited by honest Anyon, who vainly exhorted them to be just, returned and gave the verdict previously dictated to them, which was to the effect that since the children in whose names the property was claimed had not appeared before the court, they were probably dead, or else had fled beyond the seas and were, therefore, to be considered as dead. In this case all the property would belong to the mother; but as she was proscribed, and so outside the pale of the law, everything was forfeit to the royal exchequer.

After this verdict had been given, the sheriff, without any delay, went over to both the widows' houses, Rossall and Toderstaff, and laid hands on everything he could find; not even sparing things which manifestly did not belong to her, such as the girls' little personal ornaments. He also stole title-deeds belonging to Mr John Allen, the heir, who, they said, was a fugitive against the law. And all this they did in the queen's name.

Poor Mrs Allen still made a brave fight for justice. She asked to have a copy of the act of her proscription, hoping to find some legal flaw in it, but this was denied her. She then appealed to the Privy Council, but here she met with no better treatment; Cecil himself had an eye on her estates, as soon appeared, and he was the last person to have any pity for her.

And now that the spoil was secured the jackals began to fight over it. First, Trafford the sheriff and his deputy Worsley, the officer who had made the search, claimed it as their perquisite and the proper recompense of their trouble. Then two noble ladies at court claimed it, on the ground that the queen had granted them all property forfeited to the crown in the county of Lancashire. But lo! a third claimant. This was one Baptist, a pensioner of the queen, who asserted that she had granted him the goods of all recusant widows and orphans on condition that he took charge of the young maidens and saw that they were piously and properly brought up. A pretty piece of hypocrisy, truly! But on all these jackals swooped down the lion. Cecil claimed all the property for himself, and his position made it easy for him to secure it. He soon silenced the various competitors. As to the sheriff and his officer, he had them up to London and put them in prison; they were not let out till they had given security to render a strict account of the sums they had

received. As Cecil said, they had their salaries from the crown, which was all they deserved. The court ladies, he said, had only a right to property confiscated under laws already existing when the grant was made. And as to Baptist, he could only claim property up to the value of £500, and had certainly nothing to say in the case of a widow whose goods exceeded £3,000 in value. So Cecil the lion got the lion's share of the booty, though he condescended to fling a few scraps to some of the smaller fry.

And so the poor lady was robbed clean of all she had in the world; and seeing that there was no hope of redress, she determined to leave the country. This she succeeded in doing, after great difficulties and dangers, together- with her two elder daughters. They had to make a journey of two months, travelling only by nights and hiding in woods. and thickets by day. But at last they reached the coast, and by the help of God's holy angels and their guardian saints they arrived safely at Rheims. There they were received with great joy and congratulations by the illustrious princes of the House of Guise and the principal nobles and prelates of the Church of Rheims; and with even greater joy by the English exiles there, and most of all by their kinsman Dr Allen, for whose sake they had received so great a part of their bitter cup. They got to Rheims 9 September 1584, and when this account of their sufferings was written they were still there. "Here in this holy company," concludes the old chronicle, "do they live, and are happy in liberty of conscience and in daily frequenting the holy sacraments, so that they experience the truth of our Saviour's promise: 'Amen I say to you, that every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake shall receive an hundred-fold and, in the world to come, life everlasting.'"

A very few words may be added as to the subsequent history of these sufferers for conscience' sake. On 17 March 1590, they left Rheims and went to live in Flanders. Helen and Catharine, as we have seen, became nuns at Saint Monica's at Louvain; and Mary married Thomas Worthington of Blainscow Hall. Helen died in 1603, and Catharine in 1612, leaving Mary sole heiress of their brother John, who had died in 1585. Mrs Allen, like so many of the English exiles, received a pension from King Philip II of Spain. In

her case it was eighty ducats a month; but, as so often happened, she suffered sometimes great inconvenience and even went through the difficulty of getting the pension regularly paid. In 1592 we find her living at Namur, and often suffering greatly from these delays. The cardinal had to write to Count Mansfield, governor of the Low Countries, to beg him to help them and to see that the money was promptly paid. We do not hear when Mrs Allen died, but no doubt her death occurred at Louvain, where she lived happily with her daughter and son-in-law. She had suffered robbery and exile, privation and danger for the faith of her fathers, and we cannot doubt that she was judged worthy of the promises of Christ.

A Martyr and His Children

An unwonted stir pervaded the little county town of Beaumaris in Anglesea on 21 March 1591-2. It was the feast of Saint Benedict, once so greatly honoured in England and Wales; but it was no Church festival that brought together the crowds who filled the narrow streets. Elizabeth had now been long enough upon the throne for a generation to rise up who knew not the blessed saints, and had almost forgotten their very names. But the stir was about a saint none the less, for so at least we may reverently consider the holy priest whose story I am about to tell. William Davies, the priest in question, was a native of North Wales, and was probably born at Crois in Yris in Denbighshire. He was of good family and lineage, but had also the higher and rarer gifts of a singular purity of life and of great devotion to the one true faith. For more than five years he had been labouring in his native country, making many conversions, and also seeking out and fostering vocations for the priesthood. Thus he would try to instill into the Catholic young men who sought his direction, as well as those whom he had himself brought into the fold, a desire to give themselves, their fortunes and their lives to the same holy and blessed work in which he was himself engaged. And he had been able, through his singular holiness and discretion, already to send abroad several youths to study for the priesthood at Douai or Rome.

It was on an errand of this kind that he had just now gone to Holyhead, accompanied by a priest, Robert ap Hugh, and four students, of whom one was a mere boy. (We only know the Christian names of these lads; they were Roger, John, Thomas and Robert, the last-named being the youngest.) He intended to send them to the English College at Valladolid, via Ireland. But at Holyhead the little party had fallen under the suspicion of a wealthy and active Protestant of those parts, named Fulk Thomas. This man, though only a joiner by trade, was a man of some influence, and a most bitter heretic. He at once suspected our travellers to be Catholics, and insisted on their arrest. The local authorities were averse to the odious task, and only the threat of being denounced to the Privy Council induced them to take the necessary steps. As it was, Hugh ap Robert, high constable of

Llynon, to whom the capture was entrusted, managed to allow the priest Robert ap Hugh to slip through his fingers; and it was more than doubtful whether the blunder were not intentional. At any rate, Fulk Thomas believed it to be so, and wrote off at once with complaints to the council.

Father Davies and his three companions, however, had been secured, and had passed a very uncomfortable night at Holyhead in the company of a noisy rabble, who had heaped upon them every sort of insult, and prevented their sleeping by ribald mockery and noisy jests.

But now they were being brought to Beaumaris to be examined by the justices. The people, therefore, flocked to see the Papists; and while some pitied them, more mocked at their sad plight. However, the dignified and saintly bearing of the priest did not fail to impress them; for, as we shall see, there was something so winning in the humility and simplicity of Father Davies as to melt the hearts of even the most bigoted Protestants.

The little party was strictly examined as to their doings and intentions. They confessed that they were on their way to Ireland, and absolutely refused to go to the Protestant church or to take the oath of supremacy which attributed to Elizabeth supreme jurisdiction over the Church of God. For this steadfast refusal they had to suffer much abuse from the magistrates. Next day they were examined once more; and now Father Davies, who had a veritable thirst for martyrdom, frankly confessed that he was a priest of the seminary of Rheims and that he had returned home to administer the sacraments to his brethren, the Catholics of this kingdom, and to bring back as many Protestants as he could to the true religion. Of course, this was equivalent to signing his own death-warrant, and henceforth the holy priest was treated with the utmost rigour. He was torn from his companions (his "children" as he loved to call them) and cast into 'a dark, stinking dungeon between two walls of the castle of Beaumaris.' Here he was not allowed to see or speak to any one. But his sweetness and patience won the heart of his gaoler, and little by little he allowed him greater freedom. He began by permitting him to come out for an hour each day to breathe a purer air; and, as this much-prized hour fell between eight and nine in the

morning and he was allowed during the time to have free converse with his "children," the concession brought to them a still more highly-prized privilege, that of the daily sacrifice of the Mass. For by the help of Catholic friends the priest was able to procure vestments and the other requisites for the sacrifice; and so, day by day, the great oblation was offered within those gloomy prison walls, and the young students were privileged to receive the Bread of the strong for their consolation and support in the hour of need. Directly after the Mass the holy priest returned to his miserable dungeon to make his thanksgiving, and indeed he was accustomed to spend the whole of the day in sweet converse with his Lord. Little by little the gaoler relaxed his vigilance still further, and indeed became so indulgent that the little band might more than once have easily made their escape from the castle. But they were restrained not only by Father Davies's burning desire for martyrdom, but also from consideration for their kind guardian, who would certainly have been severely punished had they escaped from his care. In fact, the council was greatly incensed at the escape of Robert ap Hugh, and ordered that the high constable, his bailiff and men should be put on trial at the next assizes in July to answer the charges made against them by Fulk Thomas of having connived at the escape.

Meanwhile, the fame of Father Davies's sanctity drew many Catholics to the castle. They came from long distances to consult the holy man, some from as far as thirty or forty miles. Many and varied were the troubles thus laid at the feet of Christ's servant. There were some who came simply for the opportunity it afforded them of making their confessions, others came to consult the holy priest on the difficulties and trials into which the troubles of those sad times had plunged them. But there were yet others who needed to be reconciled to God's Church, Catholics who had fallen under the stress of persecution and denied their faith, and Protestants who could find no peace for their souls in the ordinances of the state religion. Those who could not come in person consulted the holy man by letters. Among his visitors was an official who for some time had been grievously tormented by the devil, who not only afflicted his body with many sufferings, but kept his mind in constant fear by violent assaults and alarms. He earnestly begged the priest to free him from this obsession of the evil one, but the

servant of Christ replied that it was first of all necessary that he should put himself right with God, and make a firm resolution never more to attend the heretical services. The man answered that he was very poor and had a large family, and he was afraid that if he did not conform to the established religion he would lose all his property and be thrown into prison. What then would become of his poor children? He was, therefore, afraid to promise to amend his ways, and retired full of sorrow and discouragement. But the good priest had compassion on his weakness, and sent him a piece of an *Agnus Dei*. This, we are told, had the desired effect, and the demon ceased from troubling his victim henceforth.

But Father Davies had other and less welcome visitors. These were the Protestant ministers, who flocked to the castle to annoy him with their constant disputations and their vain and captious arguments against the Catholic faith. One of them named Burgess was particularly prominent. He had a great reputation as a preacher, and used to hold forth to the people three times a day to his own huge delight and their great admiration. This good man brought two sack-fulls of books wherewith to confute the 'popish errors' of the holy prisoner. But his discretion was hardly equal to his zeal, and Father Davies, who had been well trained in scholastic philosophy and theology, soon pushed the unhappy wight into a corner, so that he began in desperation to utter all sorts of absurdities. At last he was forced by the relentless logic of the priest to deny that baptism was necessary to salvation. Father Davies turned to the gentlemen who were present at the disputation, and smiling gently said, "Sirs, if I were you I would not trust my children to be baptized by this minister, since he holdeth the rite unnecessary." Burgess was thrown into great confusion at this correction, and quickly turned the subject to conceal his overthrow, shouting out in a loud voice, "This man cannot speak the truth, for he sets himself up against the queen's commands, *et qui non obedit potestati non obedit Deo*." (*He who submitteth himself not to the powers that be, does not obey God.*)

We are now able to continue our narrative in the martyr's own words, from a very precious letter of his which has been preserved among the Stonyhurst manuscripts.

It is written from Beaumaris Castle to one whom he calls his "faithful brother," very likely the priest Robert ap Hugh, whose escape we have already chronicled. He first thanks him for the efforts that he and other friends were making to obtain his release, although he touchingly says that they are "a hindrance to his preferment" (i.e. martyrdom), and that he counts his enemies to be indeed his greatest friends, for by their help he hoped to obtain his "chief desire." So earnestly did this holy man long to shed his blood for Christ! He then continues as follows:

"But to let you understand somewhat more particular. First, ministers and preachers being sent by the ordinary, as they said, pretending also good will, flocked about me, having one Burgess to be their principal, which laid hard siege to me for the space of four or five days together, at last they gave me over. The man of Bangor was sent for by the justices. He came and spake with them and departed immediately, seeming as though he had no mind to deal with us. On Tuesday the head sheriff came in the afternoon to bring me solemnly to Justice Leighton's chamber, where was also Justice Philips, Sir Richard Fowler and others. Justice Leighton asked me some questions, as when and where I was priested, upon what intent I came to England, etc. Then he wished me to be conformable, and promising mercy, then he disputed a little about the sacrament very civilly; at last he said he was no divine, and bade Burgess who was present speak. After some reasoning, Justice Philips stood, saying that I should consider between that and the next morrow, and declaring the danger of the law."

They gave him till the next morning to consider if he would take the oath of supremacy, and accordingly he was dismissed till the morrow. Next day after a futile attempt by Burgess to upset the minds of his "children" which the martyr foiled by saying he would answer every falsehood, he was brought again before the justices.

"Justice Philips gave me very fair words wishing me to look to myself, saying it was come to that now, that a thread divided between my life and my death. I said that 'I never made other account of my life.'

"After many persuasions he began to examine me, the registrar of Bangor writing my examination, not requiring any oath at all. When

I had acknowledged my going over seas, my coming back and my intent, 'Alas' said he, 'you have spoken so much against yourself.' I said I would not go from that I had spoken. Sir Richard said I was but a simple man. Mr Gruff of Carnarvon desired leave to ask some question. The justice granted. He asked who had received and maintained me since I came to England. I said I would not answer to such a question.* The gentleman was moved [to anger] with that answer. Then the justice said it was vain to ask such a question, and that I had been asked often enough before, but would not answer.

"Then the sheriff and the chancellor took me up sharply because I would not answer, they being called by authority to demand. I, being then somewhat moved, told them they knew not what they said, and that I was not bound to answer them but what I thought meet, being a spiritual man; whereas they were but laymen, and that by right they had no authority to examine me."

"'What!' said Mr Sheriff, 'do you not know whose person Mr Justice doth represent?'

"'So I do,' said I, 'yet he is but a temporal man, yet I yield to the time.'

"The justice said nothing, but proceeded mildly, and from that time they asked me no such question.

"The justice bade me read the examination and put out what I thought good. I read it, and said I would stand to it, and so put my name to it.

"Then I was brought away, and Roger called to be examined, whom the justice used courteously. . . . With the boy they kept great stir, threatening to whip him, to set him on the pillory, to cut off his ears and his nose. Sometimes they spake him fair, promising liberty and many other fair promises; at last, if he would then but say he would go to the church he should presently go from the place whither he would. But no persuasion would serve.

"Thursday in the afternoon we were brought solemnly with the felons, guarded with halberts and bills to the bar. The grand jury having been called to give their verdict, my bill of indictment was

read, I being called and bidden to hold my hand. Then Justice Leighton stood up and took to him the statute-book, and turned to the statute according to which the bill was made and sent to me, bidding me read the statute myself. I said it needed not, but yet he would have me to read it. Then I took up the book and read it. Then he asked me what I would say for myself. I answered that I acknowledged that I had gone out of the realm and was made priest, according to the order of the Church of Rome, which is the Catholic Church, and came after to England to minister the sacraments according to the use of that Church, contrary to this statute; but for the satisfying of my mind I have this saying of Saint Augustine: *Principes quandoque sunt in errore.* (*Princes are sometimes in error.*) There he interrupted me, saying there was more skill at the making of that law than all the Papists in the world had.

"After their bills were read then everybody looked for sentence to be pronounced against me the next day. So I did myself think, but I thank God I was nothing dismayed, and I pray God I may be resolute when the time comes indeed.

"My children were in great sorrow and heaviness; Robert wept bitterly from the time the indictment was read at the bar, the space of two hours, so did all the rest after they were brought to the prison for anything I could say unto them. They spent all that night in weeping and praying. The next morning when the time came that we should be brought to the bar, the deputy sheriff came for them, saying I should not be brought at that time to the bar but the morrow after, when the justices were to depart, I should be brought to have sentence pronounced.

"When they came to the bar they found Justice Leighton sitting alone, for Justice Philips sat in another place, hearing of matters belonging to the town. Then were they somewhat comforted, for they hoped they should die with me, for Justice Leighton seemed to be more sharp with us. But it proved to be the contrary, and at first he said the boy should go without bonds to appear at the next assizes. Then the sheriff said it was not well to let him go. The justice said, 'Then let him be bailed.'

"John and Roger moved the justice for their money which the sheriff had. The justice said they ought to have it; but the sheriff

answered they should have none, for they were indebted to the queen [for their keep], and that they lived too well; he would look better unto them, and they should wear irons. "The justice said that for their debt to the queen he was to make inquiry for lands and goods, and gave order that he should allow three-pence towards every meal as long as the money lasted; but they doubt whether they shall have any.

"My children do hope, if you continue your suit for us, that we may all be delivered the next assizes; they have no mind to be released without I might also."

This letter seems to have been written just after the assizes in July, 1592. After all, Father Davies was not to suffer at this time; for some reason or other his final condemnation was to be deferred for a whole year. He does not relate the touching scene which took place when he and his children were led to the bar to hear the verdict of the jury. They were all found guilty on their respective indictments; that is to say, Father Davies of high treason and the boys of felony. At once the holy priest burst forth into the Church's hymn of thanksgiving, *Te Deum Laudamus*. His children chimed in with their young voices, and under the gloomy roof of the session-house the grand strains pealed forth: "We praise Thee, O God, and confess Thee to be the Lord." *Te gloriosus apostolorum chorus, te prophetarum laudabilis numerus, te martyrum candidatus exercitus*. Yes, the apostles, the prophets and the white-robed army of martyrs praise and glorify Thy name. But when they came to the line, *Te per orbem terrarum sancta confitetur ecclesia* - "The holy Church throughout the world doth confess Thee," the officers stopped them, and the triumphant strains were hushed. Wonderful indeed are the effects of the love of Christ which thus fills young hearts with overflowing joy at the prospect of a cruel and bloody death.

But the good people of Beaumaris, whose sympathies seem to have been won by our heroes from the outset, began to murmur at the severity of the sentence. The judge, to appease them, told them in a loud voice that as to the priest nothing could save him from death; but he thought the jury had, perhaps, gone too far in bringing in the lads guilty of felony, since it was not proved in the trial that they knew him to be a priest. He therefore ordered that all five should be

sent back to prison till the queen and her council had been informed of the case and should signify their pleasure as to what should be done with them.

Not long after this Father Davies was ordered by Corbet, the president of the council of the Marches of Wales, to come to Ludlow, where the council then had its headquarters. Here everything possible was done to induce him to deny his faith and conform to the new religion. They even resorted to an unworthy stratagem to give the appearance at any rate of his having yielded. They invited him to a disputation with the ministers, which was to be held in the church. The good priest would no doubt most gladly have excused himself, had it not been that in that case he knew the ministers would proclaim themselves victors; so he consented to attend the disputation. But no sooner was he at the door of the church than he perceived a minister in a surplice holding a Book of Common Prayer. He at once saw the trap, and turned to fly. But Corbet sent four men to catch him, and he was dragged by main force into the desecrated church and put into the reading-desk. Here they gave him the prayer-book and ordered him to read the Evening Prayer. But disgusted at their mean trickery, he flung the book across the church and absolutely refused to read a word. The judge seeing his firm resolution, commanded the minister who stood by to take up the book and begin the service. But no sooner did the "Dearly beloved brethren" meet the priest's ears than he hurriedly rose and tried to escape from the building. But the door was locked in his face, and he was forcibly held down in his place. So turning his back on the minister he began to recite the vespers of the Roman Breviary, which he knew by heart, in a very loud voice, so that the minister could not be heard, and all was confusion. And when the service was over, to prevent any scandal that might be taken by his presence there, he rose and publicly declared in the hearing of all the people, calling God and His holy angels to witness, that he had been brought thither by a stratagem and kept by force, and that he would rather die a thousand deaths than willingly take part in a heretical service.

From Ludlow he was sent in chains to Beudley. He made the journey in three days in the company of a malefactor who was ordered to the prison there. No sooner had he arrived than he was

thrust down into a miserable and fetid dungeon among a crowd of felons who lay there under sentence of death. These wretched men were so closely penned together that they had no room to stir, nor had they any place to sit or lie on except a stone bench, two feet high, by the wall. These poor criminals very civilly offered to the priest to sit on in the day and sleep on at night. His chief suffering here was from the unsupportable stench, for the dungeon was undrained and had no sort of sanitary arrangements. What he must have suffered can be better imagined than described. But he consoled himself by thinking of Pope Saint Marcellus and other holy martyrs who had lost their lives through a similar cause.

However, he was not left long at Beudley, but was hurried about from one prison to another, paraded through the streets and on the high roads in the company of criminals, and loaded with every kind of ignominy and outrage.

At last he was ordered back to Beaumaris, where his "children" had remained all this time. This gave him great joy, both from the prospect of being re-united to them, and for another reason soon to be disclosed.

However, his friends had not forgotten him, and when they heard that he was, to be sent back to Beaumaris they guessed that this would be the last stage of his *via dolorosa*. So some of them formed a plan to rescue him out of the hands of his escort on the way to the castle. They were Catholic gentlemen of position and influence, and they thought that this plan would not be very difficult, and that the priest once rescued could easily be secured from his enemies' clutches. But before carrying out their design it was necessary to impart it to the prisoner, and he absolutely refused to consent to it. He told them that even were they to come to rescue him, he would not go along with them. And this was not only from his desire not to bring them into danger on his account, but chiefly on account of his exceeding thirst for martyrdom. This was proved by the fact that on the way to Beaumaris his guards lost their way in the dark, and he, knowing the country perfectly, could easily have escaped. But far from this, he volunteered to act as their guide, and, in fact, brought them safely to the castle gates.

Here he was received with unbounded joy by his beloved children,

who begged his blessing on their knees. Bishop Yepes tells us that it was the custom of the English Catholics to welcome their priests in this humble posture, for never are God's ministers so greatly honoured and revered by the faithful as when they are poor and persecuted for the sake of Christ.

John and Robert and the rest were naturally full of eagerness to hear the adventures of their dear father, and listened with the greatest interest to all he had to tell. But most of all they wondered why he had not attempted to escape on his way back to Beaumaris. And then he told them the reason. When first he had come to Beaumaris he had earnestly besought God that if He vouchsafed to grant him the immense honour of shedding his blood for Him, He would allow it to be in this place where no one had suffered before, and where the Catholic religion was almost forgotten and unknown. And so, when he saw that he was returning thither, he began to hope that his prayer had been heard, and that if he attempted to escape he might lose the crown he so passionately longed for.

And now he was allowed to live with his dear children, and they resolved to spend the short time that was left to them in the best possible way. They accordingly devoted themselves to prayer, study and spiritual exercises, making their prison into a sort of religious house. The necessary manual work was apportioned out, and taken in turn by each of them week by week. "Thus one would take for all the office of Martha, while the others, occupied only with prayer and study, remained with Mary seated at the feet of our Lord."

They all rose at four o'clock, and then spent an hour in mental prayer. Then they recited together the divine office, and Father Davies said mass. He used to offer the divine sacrifice with extraordinary devotion, shedding many tears, which he could not conceal, do what he would, so full was his heart of divine consolations. Twice a week his children confessed and received the Blessed Sacrament from their father's hands. They communicated also on the feast of "the saint of the month," i.e., the saint which each by lot had obtained as his patron for the month. After mass and thanksgiving they sang together the antiphon *O sacrum convivium*, (*"O sacred feast in which Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is brought to our remembrance, our souls are filled with*

grace, and the pledge of future glory is given unto us, Alleluia!") and then applied themselves to their studies, while the priest betook himself to prayer.

At their meals the holy man taught them to make little acts of mortification, by denying themselves in those things for which they had a special liking.

After meals they employed half an hour in reading the "Imitation of Christ" or other spiritual books; after which their good father entertained them by telling them stories of the lives of the saints or recounting the marvels of religious art and devotion which he had witnessed abroad in Catholic countries, such as the magnificence with which the sacred offices were celebrated, the "sepulchres" in holy week, the concourse of pilgrims who flocked to Rome in the holy year of jubilee, the solemnity of the *Corpus Christi* procession and so on.

Then they recited together the litany of our Blessed Lady, and spent the rest of the afternoon and evening in study, and in saying their beads, while Father Davies gave himself again to prayer or to the needs of those who flocked to consult him on spiritual affairs. At night they said together the litany of the saints, and after examining their consciences went to rest.

"This manner of life they led for six months, and seemed to all men to be dwelling, not amid the miseries of prison, but in the joys of heaven."

As to the servant of Christ, he was not content with this penitential life and all the hardships of imprisonments, but wore all the while, day and night, a rough hair-shirt woven like a net, which he had also been wont to wear before his capture. He concealed this as long as he could, but just before his martyrdom he gave it to one of his children as a last sign of friendship, and in order that it might not be discovered when they stripped his body for the knife.

We have now come to the month of July, 1593, a whole year since at the last assizes the holy priest and his companions had been condemned to death.

And now the assizes were held again at Beaumaris, and Father Davies was once more brought to the bar, this time to receive his final sentence. The judge, after pronouncing the terrible sentence which condemned him to a death unequalled for savage barbarity, extolled the queen's clemency, and told him that if he would but once attend church he might not only save his life but also look for preferment and favour. But the martyr, raising his eyes to heaven, once more intoned the *Te Deum*, blessing our Lord "that he was now to be so happy as to shed his blood for the love of His divine Majesty."

The judge bade them take him away, and he was accordingly conducted back to prison. But he was now separated from his beloved children, and put in a dark and loathsome dungeon called "the black alley," where he gave himself up to prayer and meditation till he was brought forth to be executed. Those of his friends who were allowed to see him were consoled by his own great cheerfulness; indeed he comforted them, rather than they him. "When any would tell him that they hoped he should be reprieved he would wax very sad and heavy; when he was told that he must be executed he would be most merry and pleasant."

Some days passed before the sentence could be put into execution, for the people of Beaumaris had conceived so high an opinion of the martyr's sanctity, and so great a veneration for him, that not a man in the town would furnish, for love or money, anything necessary for that purpose, such as ladder, rope, cauldron, wood, etc. Much less could any one be found to do the hangman's office, not even the criminals condemned to death; so that at length the sheriff was forced to send to Westchester, forty-two miles off, for a poor butcher, and a hangman that was in prison for thievery. These two were brought to Anglesea, and hired for £4 or £5, and were hidden in a barn and fed with stolen scraps like hungry dogs until the day appointed for the execution. At first indeed they had tried to find a lodging in the town, but the people suspected the reason of their coming, and they were turned away from every door they came to, and at last had to take refuge on the beach, whither the boys pursued them with stones. Indeed they might have been killed had not the sheriff come out with a guard to protect them; and while they remained at Beaumaris there was more need of a guard for the

hangmen than for their victim. The sheriff had also great difficulty in finding a place whereon to set up the gallows, since the townspeople absolutely refused to let him have any. So he was obliged to make a new gallows, and set it within the liberties of the castle, outside the liberties of the town. It was even said that he had to send to his own house for a cauldron, but we are told "the truth is that an old covetous woman in the town, that would not be known of it, lent hers, and gave a few faggots withal to the deputy sheriff for eight shillings of money."

In the meantime some of the gentlemen or the neighbourhood made yet another plan to rescue the priest out of the hands of his persecutors, on the very morning of his martyrdom; but he earnestly entreated them, for the love of Jesus Christ, not to think of any such enterprise, which would expose themselves to so great a danger and do him no service.

The holy martyr was brought out to suffer on the feast of Saint Pantaleon, July 27. Just before, he had delivered through a crevice in the wall tokens for his "children" and friends, to remind them to remain staunch in the Catholic faith.

As he was brought out to the hurdle he had to pass the windows where his young companions were assembled to bid him their last farewell. He turned towards them with a cheerful smile; and, as they sank on their knees with bitter and uncontrollable tears, he raised his fettered hands in benediction, making with them, as best he could, the sign of the holy cross. He gently rebuked them for their tears, saying: "Is this the help you give me, to seek by your tears to make me falter in my purpose? Would it not be better to encourage me by some good words, or at least by cheerful faces? What occasion is there for lamentation? What greater boon could you desire for me than this which my enemies are now bestowing on me, even the vision of my God: Pray for help and strength for me in the conflict, that I may come forth from it victorious."

The sheriff, bailiffs and servants bound him and set him on the hurdle drawn by a horse which they were obliged to drive themselves, since they could find no one else who was willing to do it. Being much ashamed at this, they sought everywhere to find a driver. But no one would consent, and the hangmen were afraid of

being stoned, so they would not either. At last they met a poor boy whom they thought they could manage, and so they began with honeyed speeches and promises of large reward; but as this failed, proceeded to threaten with imprisonment, flogging and so forth if he would not drive the horse. The deputy-sheriff even threatened to hang him. The boy replied: "I am well content to be hanged with this man with all my heart, but drive the horse I will not, do what you will." He then ran for his life and jumped into the castle moat, which was full of water, up to his' neck, and so they had to leave him. The sheriff was obliged to order one of his own relations to drive the horse, but the martyr now intervened, saying: "You shall not need, Mr Sheriff, to trouble any more; the horse will go of himself."

Being come to the place, he was permitted a good while to pray upon his knees, which he did very devoutly, until at length the minister, Burgess, overheard him say *Ave maris stella*, invoking our Blessed Lady, whereat he was sore displeased, and urged the sheriff to despatch him. The deputy-sheriff, for the high sheriff was not present, asked the martyr what he thought of the queen. "God give her a long, prosperous reign and grace to die a member of the Catholic Church," he sweetly replied. He was then made to mount the ladder. Taking the rope, he kissed it and put it about his neck, saying: "Thy yoke, O Lord, is sweet, and Thy burthen is light." No doubt his thoughts flew back to the prayer which he was wont to recite day by day as he vested for holy mass. Surely this was indeed his last mass! He also said: "This island of Anglesea was called in the old time the dark island, the which name it never better deserved than at this present. But I beseech God that the blood which I am brought hither innocently to shed may give unto it the light of that faith which it received above a thousand years agoe.' But he was interrupted and was not suffered to address the people. So saying softly three times over *In manus tuas Domine*, "into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," the ladder was turned and he was thrown off it. He closed his fists hard and so kept them till he died, when he spread his hands open. The hangman pulled him by the feet that he might the more quickly die, and so his spirit passed away before he was cut down. The sacred body was then subjected to all the disgusting mutilations ordered by the law. It was indeed a special mercy of God that he was not still alive, for the deputy-

sheriff kept urging the hangman to cut him down quickly, probably fearing lest he should be complained of for lack of zeal. The martyr's head was set up on Beaumaris Castle, on the top of the chimney of the very cell where his dear children were confined. Two of his quarters were also exposed on the castle battlements, another on Conway Castle, and the fourth at Caers (Caerwys?).

The hangman, seeing that the cassock and the clothes the martyr wore had been soaked and stained with his blood so that they were of no value to themselves, guided no doubt by heaven, determined to take them to the castle and sell them to his companions. So they were put, still dripping with blood, on the table where the father was wont to say his daily Mass. The martyr's children were naturally delighted to have this precious treasure, and remarked with emotion that the hour when they were laid upon the table was the very time (between 8 and 9 a.m.) when their father had been wont to say holy Mass on that same table, and offer there to the eternal Father the precious Blood of His only-begotten Son.

And so kneeling down they venerated these sacred relics of the martyr, and after kissing them with great tenderness and devotion they put them in a safe receptacle, and entrusted them to a Catholic who took them and guarded them with all diligence and care. Indeed it was fortunate they did so, for no sooner had this man left the prison with them than the sheriff's officer entered in search of them, saying the sheriff had ordered him to carry them off and destroy them.

The clothes were divided among the Catholics, and the whole cassock stained with the martyr's blood was kept in a certain part of the kingdom that priests might with much devotion wear it under their priestly vestments when they said Mass.

Catholic historians have dwelt on the terrible punishments which overtook the principal agents in the martyr's death. The hangman not long after incurred the death-penalty for some crime of which he had been guilty; and when at the foot of the gallows, he made open declaration that of all he had done in his life nothing troubled his conscience so much as having imbrued his hands in the blood of so holy a man, confessing that God had justly on that account brought him to suffer a shameful death. Fulk Thomas, the martyr's

accuser, also came to a miserable end; he lost both his money and his credit, and, having become by his treachery an object of universal loathing, slunk away into obscurity and was never heard of again. The constable who apprehended the martyr died almost immediately afterwards of gangrene, a most painful and miserable death.

But rather let us turn to the faithful companions of the martyr, those dear "children" whom he loved so tenderly, and who had hitherto walked so faithfully in his footsteps. Did they persevere now that their father was taken from them: We are happy to believe that they did. But we know the subsequent history of only one of them. This was "the boy," the youngest of all, who had so manfully withstood the judge's threats of the pillory and whipping-post. After the martyr's death he was put into the hands of a country schoolmaster "to be whipped into a conformity with the Church by law established." But he eventually found means to escape over into Ireland, and there meeting with an old school-fellow, he persuaded him to be reconciled to the Catholic Church, and then join him in carrying out his long-cherished purpose of crossing over to Spain to the college of Valladolid.

"They betook themselves thither," writes Bishop Yepes, "and are now living there with great edification to all, whilst I write this, which is on 2 July 1598."

If the boy was so faithful we may surely hope the same of his elder companions, and trust that Thomas, John and Robert are now at their father's side in paradise, pleading with him for the conversion of their country to the faith for which they suffered so nobly and so long.

A Story of Wisbech Castle

Wisbech Castle, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, was one of the most gloomy places that can well be imagined. Originally a palace of the bishops of Ely, it had been abandoned by its episcopal owners on account of the unhealthiness of the site, and allowed to fall into ruin and decay. The Isle of Ely, in which Wisbech is situated, is well known to be in the midst of a marshy district; and as in those days it was not properly drained, the castle was surrounded by the refuse water of the rivers that wash the extremity of the county of Cambridge from the north between Lincolnshire and Norfolk. The ground lay so low that the numerous streams could not properly run off it; and so having no outlet, they gradually formed into large pieces of brackish, stagnant water, which gave out miasmas that poisoned the air and filled it with the germs of malarial fever. Thus it was thought to be a very fitting place in which to imprison those holy men whose only crime was their inviolable fidelity to the faith of their fathers. Prominent Catholics, whom it would be impolitic to slay by the halter and the knife, could very well be disposed of by the pestilential air of Wisbech; and accordingly this miserable, ruinous castle became the prison and the grave of men like Watson, last bishop of Lincoln, and Feckenham, last abbot of Westminster. Here, too, the last aged monk of Westminster, Dom Sigebert Buckley, was imprisoned at a later period. Indeed, the dungeons of Wisbech became filled with priests, most of whom were allowed to live in common, so that they were able to enjoy a certain amount of intercourse, the extent of which depended in great measure on the caprice or interest of their gaolers, Father Tanner gives us a melancholy description of the place: "It is now rather a ruin than a building: surrounded with cracked walls on every side; roofless, because the avarice of heretical bishops has removed the lead and copper sheeting; without ceilings, the joists and rafters having been torn down: a place destined by Elizabeth for a common sepulchre of Catholics and priests, who were kept in close confinement and excluded from intercourse with those dear to them."

The unfortunate prisoners were not even here safe from the intrusions of their bitterest enemies. One would have thought that as they had resigned everything - homes, friends, goods and liberty,

for conscience' sake, they would be at least permitted to practise their religion without let or hindrance. But far from it; it was ordered by the ingenious cruelty of their persecutors that they were to be placed under the spiritual charge of a Protestant minister, who should get "his charge of diet and other necessities by the contributions of the recusants." In other words, they had to pay an Anglican clergyman to preach at them in their prison. The minister was to see that they attended common prayer: twice a day and "preaching twice in the week at the least." If they refused they were to be fined at the pleasure of the bishop of Ely. Each prisoner moreover had to submit to a private lecture twice a week, in which the minister or "other learned men sent by the bishop" expounded the "errors of Popery" in the blasphemous style fashionable at the time. But they were not to have conference with each other except at meal time, and then there was to be "no speech of any matters in controversy." Nor were the unhappy Catholics even allowed the solace of books, except such as had been approved by the minister.

A letter from a priest in London at this time to the rector of the English College in Rome remarks: "No access to the prisoners is allowed, and we are obliged to use tricks to communicate with them. When any one wants to give them alms he walks in the neighbouring fields the day before, and cries out as if he were looking for game. At this sign some person looks out from the window, and learns by signal that there is something for the prisoners. The next night, when everybody is asleep, the sportsman cautiously creeps up to the wall, and one of the prisoners lets down a basket from the window whence the sign was given, and draws up what is put into it."

We must not suppose, however, that the prisoners tamely submitted to the spiritual intrusions of the ministers. On the contrary, we have a letter from the gaoler of Wisbech, who complains that they "had been called divers times and as often required to hear the preacher and abide the prayer; but they all with one voice generally, and after that every man particularly answering for himself, denied to allow either, saying that as they were not of our Church, so they would neither hear, pray nor yet confer with us of any matters touching religion." Indeed, they not only steadfastly refused to listen to the minister but even contrived, by means no doubt of

bribes to the gaoler, to have holy Mass celebrated almost daily in the prison.

The Catholics confined at Wisbech numbered on the average from thirty to five-and-thirty. They were, as we have said, shut up day and night in their cells except at dinner and supper, for which meals they met at a common table. But the keeper and his wife were always present, and occupied each end of the table; and we are told that they were always on the watch "for fear of a word being dropped that they could not themselves hear."

Later on, indeed, the prisoners obtained greater liberty; and Wisbech became a sort of pilgrimage for pious Catholics of both sexes, who flocked there to succour the priests in temporal things, and to receive from them spiritual help and consolation. But this was not till later, and for many years the prisoners had few opportunities of conversation except with the keepers and with the boys who were permitted to wait on them. For, strange as it may seem, there were about a dozen serving-lads in the prison, some of whom attended generally to the prisoners' wants, while others were attached to the service of one or other of them. These boys, of course, were paid by the prisoners; and no doubt they did most of the work that would otherwise have fallen on the gaoler and his assistants, and therefore their presence was tolerated. Protestant lads were, of course, chosen; but, alas! who could guarantee their remaining Protestants? "Naturally clever and observant," writes Dr Lee, "by degrees they became greatly influenced by what they heard and saw. The old religion, as so many persons quietly and privately maintained, was a strong and remarkable contrast to the new; and though these youths had been brought up under the latter, in no long time they became sincerely attached to the former, and at their own request were carefully instructed in its tenets and duties."

There was a notable example of this in the case of the Fisher boys, and it is their story that I wish to tell. There were two brothers of this name in the castle: Thomas, aged sixteen, who was servant to the whole company of prisoners; and George, aged fourteen, who had successively been attached to the service of Father Dryland and Father Bickley, both of the Society of Jesus.

In the course of some months these boys learned so much of the

Catholic religion that by degrees they became disgusted with Protestantism, and left off attending the heretical services. When the governor of the castle heard this, he fixed on a certain festival, and commanded that the boys should be made to attend the sermon that was to be preached on the occasion. They, however, absolutely refused. This made him so angry that he had them cruelly flogged in the public market-place in the presence of all the people. However, after a time the poor lads were set free; and George managed to slip away, and, through the kind offices of a priest, he got safely to Belgium, where he entered the English College at Douai.

And here we may remark that it must not be supposed that the lads were of low birth on account of their menial position; in those days lads of good family frequently entered into domestic service, especially in noble households, without thereby losing their position in life. As a matter of fact, though Mr Fisher was of the middle-class, his wife was of high family. Both were "schismatics," that is to say, people who, although Catholics at heart, conformed to the state religion for the sake of preserving their property. The culpable weakness of these schismatics brought about the gradual protestantizing of England.

But to return to our lads. (George reached Douai and was received into the Church there in 1597. His brother Thomas was left behind, to endure greater hardships. The poor boy was captured a second time, and thrust into the prison at Ely, where for many months he had to undergo all sorts of privations. We will give the story of his conflict in the words of the celebrated Jesuit, Father William Watson, who was a prisoner at Wisbech at the time.

"At length he was brought to trial in company with several criminals, and was indicted upon the sole ground of his being a Catholic. 'You, indeed,' said some one, 'wanting to be a Catholic, when you have never so much as seen a Mass, and do not know what this sect means! Who could it ever have been who drove you into such folly?' The others meantime began to mock him and turn him into ridicule, seeing how very young he was to do such a thing. He replied, 'It is true, as you say, that I have not seen much, nor heard much concerning the Catholic faith; and, as you see, I am

young enough, and not well practised or brought up in it; but there is one thing I know well and understand, that it is the only faith for salvation, and much more ancient than your new religion; yea, and older by many centuries.' They said to him, 'How can you, an ignorant boy, tell what is oldest? You are deceiving yourself.' 'It is not I,' he replied, 'but your own chroniclers, and a man of your own profession, and one of your ministers: Holinshed, I mean, who asserts as much plainly in his chronicle.' They all denied that there was anything of the kind in Holinshed's book. 'Indeed there is,' he replied. 'I am telling no lie; I know what I am talking of; and at the same time he produced from his bosom a great leaf torn out of Holinshed's chronicle, and continued, 'Now, to begin with, recognize your man by his name; then, if you please, read the words that are contained in this torn leaf. When they had openly read the page, they were sorry and much ashamed of what they had done; for it contained a description of the entrance of Saint Augustine, the apostle of England, with the cross, litanies and relics, and all the other tokens of a Catholic ceremonial. A Catholic prisoner in Wisbech had torn the leaf out of his own book and had admonished the boy to preserve it carefully, so that when he should be brought to trial for his faith he need assert nothing else with regard to his religion, or say anything besides, but satisfy himself with showing that torn leaf to the judges. This was done by the youth very opportunely, both as to time and place; and he so put them to confusion that they did not know what they ought to say in reply." Thomas, indeed, seems to have confused the judges so much that they set him at liberty, or at least allowed him to return to Wisbech castle. Here he was visited by his elder brother Richard, who was still a Protestant. He was eighteen years old at the time, and had been studying law, or making believe to do so, in London. Here is his own account of his visit.

"At Easter I went into the country according to custom for the festivities. As I was preparing to return I learned that my brother, now here under your reverence's protection, was in Wisbech, a place specially hateful to me because I saw that he was wearing out his days there. However, I greatly desired to see him, and went to Wisbech Castle and asked for him. He came, and, after many words of greeting, said that in a short time he should follow his brother George, who a little before, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

had left father, mother and all his friends. I was greatly troubled at these words, and broke forth into angry complaints, saying, 'What has put this into your head?' 'Why do you complain?' he replied; 'I only seek the salvation of my soul,' or similar words, as far as I recollect. He also prayed me to turn my steps into the same course and accompany him in his journey. After conversing with him I could not refuse, as he was exceedingly dear to me, and I thought I would go with him and see all those things about which he spoke, for he had said nothing to me about religion or the austere life of persons in foreign countries." Richard, in fact, seems to have thought it would be fine fun to take a trip abroad, especially as it would have the additional zest of having to be undertaken by stealth, and he would escape thereby his tiresome law studies, of which he confesses he was not too fond.

So he resolved he would go and see for himself if things were so delightful abroad as the glowing fancy of his brother painted them, and if not he could easily come home again. Meantime, however, the crafty Thomas had introduced him to a priest, the Rev. John Greene, a Staffordshire man, who was one of the prisoners in the castle. Father Greene received the lad very kindly, and quite won his heart by his goodness. "I felt," says Richard simply, "a great leaning towards him, because he had done so much for me whom he had never seen before." How easily we can picture the scene! The lad, gay and worldly, yet so affectionate and warm-hearted, quite surprised at the eager kindness with which he is treated by the imprisoned priest, the trouble that is taken about him and his future, the kind promises of providing for him and giving him a good education if he would only make up his mind to become a Catholic; it is all so natural and boyish. And then the pleasant anticipations of foreign travel and of being once more united to the brothers he loved so warmly; no wonder Dick Fisher was easily persuaded. But the grace of God it was that did the work after all, and we may be pretty sure that the prayers and the sufferings of Thomas Fisher, as he lay on the hard stone floor of his Ely dungeon, had been offered up for this dear brother, and not offered in vain. For when he had made up his mind to go, Richard had also a good deal of trouble, though of a different kind, to go through. His family and friends began to weep and lament, and generally created such a disturbance that the poor lad was almost driven crazy. And when at

last the farewells had been said, and he had torn himself away and was already four miles on his way, his father must needs send a special messenger on horseback after him with the express command to return if he wished to see his mother again alive. What could the poor warm-hearted lad do but obey? So he came back to find the house filled with sympathizing women, who had been attracted there by his mother's hysterical shrieks and sobs. No doubt he had a little martyrdom, quite as hard as Thomas's, to endure before he could once more succeed in getting away. But he went to his mother, and on bended knees humbly implored her to take his departure patiently, declaring that his resolve was quite unchangeable. After this he again said good-bye to all, and rejoined his brother by night.

Such a brave lad deserved to obtain the priesthood; but unfortunately, although he reached the English College at Rome in 1599, together with the glorious martyr Venerable Robert Watkinson, his health broke down there, and he had to be sent back to Belgium in May of the next year, without taking the usual missionary oath. Thomas reached Rome a year before his brother, October, 1598. We do not know how this was; but probably Richard stayed behind at Douai where little George was busy studying his classics. He, too, did not find the Roman air very healthy, and he was sent back to Douai in October, 1602. Next year he was ordained priest, and was sent back to England in 1604. His apostolate must, one would think, have been a very fruitful one, judging by the courage and the prudence he displayed when so young; but I have not been able to trace his career further. George seems to have become the most learned of the three brothers. After studying four years at Douai, he was sent to Rome for his higher studies in October, 1601. He was ordained priest March 11, 1606; and no doubt said his first Mass on the following day, the feast of Saint Gregory, apostle of England. Next year he was sent from Rome for England; but the authorities of Douai found him too useful in the college to let him go, and he remained there a year as professor of theology. Even when he did leave for England, in September, 1608, he was exhorted to return quickly to resume his chair.

And thus the two lads who were flogged in Wisbech market-place

became priests of the Holy Catholic Church and missionaries in the land of their birth.

The Vulnerata

"The mercy and clemency that hath been shown here will be spoken of throughout the world," wrote Howard, the Lord High Admiral, at the taking of Cadiz in 1596.

This expedition, under command of the earl of Essex and Lord Howard, had sailed for the famous Spanish port on June 1 from Plymouth harbour. In three weeks' time Cadiz had fallen, and the Spanish king had lost thirteen men-of-war, immense magazines of ammunition and naval stores, besides the strongest fortress of his dominions.

It was a terrible blow for Spain, and one that amply avenged the ill-starred attempt of the Armada on our shores. "The inhabitants of Cadiz paid a ransom of 120,000 crowns for their lives, and the town, the merchandise and every kind of property was abandoned to the rapacity of the conquerors." Raleigh indeed complained that for his part he had got nothing but "a lame leg and a deformed," while the other officers had made large fortunes from the plunder, but that is probably not to be taken too literally. However that may be, the success of the audacious raid upon Cadiz was signal and complete, and English renown for daring and valour was immensely increased throughout Europe.

The proud town of Cadiz was reduced to ashes, save for the churches, which were spared, but the inhabitants had reason to praise the moderation and humanity of the English commanders, who had sent under a safe escort their women, and especially the consecrated virgins, to the number of some three thousand, to the port of Saint Mary, and had allowed them to take with them their jewels and wearing apparel. This was rare humanity in the age of Alva and Elizabeth, and Lord Howard was probably not far wrong when he said that the mercy shown by his troops would be spoken of throughout the world.

But, alas! there is a darker side to this picture. The nuns of Cadiz were saved indeed from insult; no blood was wantonly spilt in the streets of the fallen city, but what to faithful Catholic hearts must

have been worse even than death was to see the horrid outrages offered by the Protestant soldiery to the most sacred symbols of their faith.

Which of the daughters of Saint Clare or St Scholastica, as she was hurried away from her convent with the other fugitives, would not have gladly died to save the image of the Queen of heaven from profane and hideous insult? But this was the hour of the powers of darkness, and it seemed that hell was let loose that day in fair Cadiz.

Amid the burning houses see that band of soldiers and sailors staggering in drunken fury out of the portals of yon stately church! What is the burden they are dragging behind them? Alas! it is a large image of the Blessed Virgin. With wild shouts and blasphemous cries they drag it along the street by a rope tied round the Madonna's neck. Others follow after and vent their frenzied rage on it by hacking it in face and breast and arms with their swords and cutlasses. Suddenly an impious hand begins to hew at the image of the Divine Child, which smiles at him enthroned in His mother's arms. Others join in, and soon the Child is torn from the mother's embrace and Mary is handless: for the quickest way to separate them was to hack off the mother's arms. And so Jesus and Mary, severed and mutilated, are now dragged in mock procession through those streets where so often in happier times they have been borne in solemn state with sacred chant and banner, while curling wreaths of incense-smoke perfumed the southern air. It is a tragedy to make the angels weep! Here are our countrymen, once the liegemen of Mary's dower, whose fathers had been on pilgrimage to Walsingham and Worcester and many another shrine of the heavenly Queen throughout the length and breadth of the land, now dishonouring her to whom their mothers prayed, filled with wildest heretical hatred against the mother of our Lord, hacking and mutilating her dear and sacred image. We should not indeed have the heart to relate the story were it not that English piety and English faith were to make a noble reparation for English blasphemy, and that the glory of Mary was to be exalted even by the hatred of her foes.

When the invading force had sailed away from Spain, leaving Cadiz

a mass of blackened, smoking ruins, the people returned to their devastated homes. And amid the ruin and the wreckage they found the mutilated image of our Blessed Lady. Doubtless there were others, but none, perhaps, that had been treated with such brutal indignity as this. We can imagine how pious hearts wept over the sight, with what reverent care they gathered up the poor mutilated image, and what fervent acts of reparation they offered for the outrages that had been heaped on it.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the nature and extent of these mutilations: they can well be seen in the picture of the image which forms our frontispiece. It brings tears to the eyes to gaze upon this pathetic figure of the Queen of martyrs, and when we remember that English hands inflicted these wounds, surely we can but feel an increase of devotion to our Blessed Lady as well as of sorrow for the miserable blindness of heresy, and of burning desire for the conversion of our country.

Truly those days are past, never, as we hope, to return. But though the first frenzy of heresy has died out in England, still there is very much to be done before our people love Mary again as they did in the old Catholic days; and still there is reparation to be made for the sins of the evil past.

The wounded image of Mary was reverently preserved in the private oratory of a devout Spanish lady, the countess of Saint Agatha, who lived at Madrid. Thither in 1600 came Father Blackfan, S.J., minister of the English College at Valladolid, on business connected with that seminary. While in Madrid he had heard the story of the Madonna of Cadiz. His heart burned within him as he thought that the outrage worked by English heretics would surely most fittingly be repaired by the love and veneration of Catholic Englishmen. The outrage, too, had been public, and so should be the reparation. What a priceless treasure would this Madonna be to the church of the English College; how the very sight of her would stir the students to fervour, and increase their apostolic zeal! So, moved by these thoughts, without delay he approached the noble lady and earnestly begged her to give him the sacred image for the college of Saint Alban. But she felt a natural reluctance to part with her treasure, for which she had a special

devotion, and the father minister's prayer was not granted. Tar from despairing, however, he wrote to the prefect of the English mission, the well-known Father Creswell, who was then at Valladolid, and begged him to take the matter up. This Father Creswell did with great zeal, writing most pressingly to the countess, and backing up his request with a petition signed by the rector of the college and all the students. The good lady could not resist these multiplied entreaties, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, "The fathers compel me to yield, and I see it is God's will that I should resist no longer." So she nobly gave up the sacred image, and, not content with this, she had a shrine made for it, together with a golden crown, a silver lamp and other rich gifts. She took it herself in her own coach to Valladolid on September 3, being determined, like the noble-hearted Catholic she was, that her sacrifice should be made completely and ungrudgingly. Meanwhile, the king and queen were informed of the whole matter, and preparations were made for giving a solemn reception to the Madonna.

The queen took the whole matter into her own hands, and commanded that both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the city should receive the sacred image in solemn procession and conduct it in state to the church of the English College. The day fixed was an appropriate one: the Nativity of our Lady. So on the eve (September 7, which was celebrated in England as the birthday of Queen Elizabeth) the Madonna was borne, veiled and in secret, at break of day to the church of the Carmelites. Here the friars received it with the greatest devotion, and it was exposed in veneration in the principal chapel, which had been splendidly adorned with tapestry for the occasion. At vesper time it was taken in solemn procession to the cathedral, accompanied by twenty of the English students and four of the Jesuit fathers bearing lighted tapers, and followed by a vast concourse of noblemen and gentlemen, besides crowds of the common people.

At the entrance to the cathedral the Madonna was received by the bishop, his chapter and the whole of the clergy, and after the first vespers of the feast had been solemnly chanted the procession was re-formed in a still more solemn and magnificent manner, and the image once so outraged and profaned was borne to the English College accompanied by the homage and veneration of the court of

Spain and the whole city of Valladolid. It was a truly striking testimony to the place that Mary's honour and Mary's name had in the hearts of a Catholic people. And as the solemn cortège approached the college gates there came out to meet it the queen of Spain herself, accompanied by her ladies in waiting. What a contrast to the conduct of the queen of England, who at Coldham Hall delivered an image of Mary to the tender mercies of a ribald mob, and smiled approvingly on the horrible scene that ensued when, after suffering every species of indignity, the Madonna was tossed on to a bonfire and consumed amidst the blasphemous exultation of the crowd! But in Spain people had not then learnt, as thank God, they never yet have learnt, that we honour Jesus best by dishonouring His blessed Mother.

So amid the fervent prayers of a Catholic sovereign and a Catholic people, the mutilated image was solemnly placed by the bishop in its new resting-place over the high altar of the church:

And at the same time the title of the *Vulnerata* ("the wounded one") was solemnly conferred on it. And so from that day to this the *Vulnerata* has been venerated at Saint Alban's college; from that day to this generation after generation of young levites have nourished their piety and rekindled their fervour at the feet of this Queen of martyrs; from that day to this prayers and litanies and holy masses have been ascending to God for the conversion of England from the sanctuary of this Madonna, wounded and profaned by English hands. Young men have knelt before this image and have gained at its feet the supreme grace of shedding their blood for the faith, and countless are the favours, spiritual and temporal, which Mary has obtained for her clients in this holy place.

The people of Valladolid ever held the *Vulnerata* in special honour. An association of pious ladies of the town was formed, whose duty it was to come and arrange the mantles with which Spanish piety tried to conceal the more shocking mutilations of the *Vulnerata*, according to the feast. They were called *Las Camereras de la Vulnerata*, the ladies in waiting, as it were, of the wounded queen. Doña Luisa de Carvajal, that saintly and noble lady who gave up her life for the sake of the persecuted English Catholics, was one of the first of these *Camereras*. She came to live next door to the

church in order to be near her beloved Madonna, and received holy communion near it every morning prior to her departure for England.

Still the collegians celebrate their *Missa Cantata* every Saturday morning in our Lady's praise, and in the evening recite their *Letanias* in reparation of the insults of the Englishmen of 1596.

The miracles granted through the intercession of *Nuestra Señora de los Ingleses* are numerous and well authenticated. Father Blackfan relates one which happened to the priest of a neighbouring parish, who was his own penitent. P. Villafranca in his book on the sanctuaries of Spain gives a whole chapter of well authenticated miracles attributed to the intercession of "our Lady of the English." One is the return to life of a little boy, eighteen months old; another the wondrous cure of an Irish priest, who was chaplain to a family in the town, whilst saying mass before the image.

The present church was built some fifty years later than the coming of the Madonna, as a special shrine for her. At a later date the *Vulnerata* was solemnly crowned, and eight large pictures still hang in the church, which recount the whole history of the sacred image from its profanation to its solemn coronation. Such is a brief history of a shrine which should be specially dear to the hearts of English Catholics; may it inspire the reader with renewed zeal for the conversion of our country! *Regina martyrum ora pro Anglia.*

Elizabeth's Last Victim

The old queen was drawing very near her end when a priest was martyred at Tyburn for the Catholic faith. He was but the last of a long line of heroic victims whose blood had been poured out like water to cement the foundations of the Anglican establishment. William Richardson, or Anderson as he was sometimes called, was a Yorkshireman. He had been educated first at Douai and then in Spain at Valladolid and Seville. His labours in England had been very fruitful. Like so many priests of those days, he found a refuge in one of the Inns of Court, where, like Blessed Ralph Sherwin and Venerable John Roberts, he found many who were eagerly seeking after truth. He attracted these ardent young souls around him, and in a short time made a number of converts. These placed themselves under his direction, and soon made such progress in the spiritual life that they lived rather as religious than as young lawyers are wont to do, submitting themselves so entirely to the priest's direction that they would hardly do anything without his advice or approval. But this state of things could not last long; the very fervour of the young converts attracted attention to their director. He became known as a priest, and was arrested after some years' devoted labour. He would probably have been taken sooner had he not had friends at court. It may well be imagined that his spiritual sons did not give up their father in his hour of trial; on the contrary, they planned his escape, and went to the prison to tell him of the scheme they had made and to beg his consent. They had resolved to rescue him by night at whatever peril to themselves; but the man of God, although deeply touched at this sign of their affection, utterly refused to consent to their wishes. "Do not," I beseech you, put your lives in peril for me," he cried; "I know well it comes from your great love for me, that you want to spare me the tortures and the terrible death that await me; but if you consider the matter aright, you will see that this would be no real kindness. For after all, you wish me well; and if you wish me well, then you ought to wish for me the very best things that could befall me. But what could you possibly wish for me that would be more honourable or more glorious, that would gain me more merit or more certainly ensure my eternal salvation, than to die a thousand deaths, if need be, for

the confession of the true faith and the Christian religion?

"Yes, to suffer a thousand torments at the hands of the torturers, and to be cast out of this dungeon only to fly to the eternal joys of heaven; what a privilege is this! It is granted to but few, and if I allow this opportunity to escape me, who knows if I shall ever have another? Leave me then, my sons, for I know what is profitable for me. Rather strive with me in prayer to God that He may give me prudence and wisdom to reply discreetly to the judges, and strength of soul to bear whatever sufferings are laid upon me."

What could they do on hearing these noble words but yield to the confessor the crown he so ardently desired? With tears they sought his parting blessing, and left him in his wretched dungeon.

When he was brought up for trial he boldly confessed that he was a priest duly ordained beyond the seas, and that he had returned to England in order to bring back erring souls into the way of truth. They sought to accuse him of many crimes against his queen and country, but he calmly answered, "I have never designed anything against the queen, save, indeed, her conversion, and for this I daily strive in prayer with God. If this be evil, then I do not deny it. As to my country, I have never wished it anything but true prosperity, and you will not be able to prove anything else against me." "There is no need of other proofs," replied the judge; "from your own mouth we judge you, because you confess yourself a Papist, ordained by the authority of the Roman pontiff, who is the bitterest foe of our queen and country. You confess that you have come here that you may bring over our people to his side, and this is the crime of treason, and as such is condemned by the laws of this realm. Still, if you are willing now to come to a better mind, there is yet a chance of mercy for you."

"I hold your mercy in no account," he said: "for in very truth it is the greatest cruelty. The very worst that you can devise against me will turn out the best for me. Do not spare me, then, but decree in my case whatever your laws or your state prescribe. I will most readily and gladly bear it all."

After this the jury were charged and with but little delay found him guilty. Sentence was passed in the usual manner, the holy priest

being condemned to all the barbarous and disgusting penalties decreed by Elizabeth's laws against Catholic missionaries. But he only raised his eyes to heaven, and appealed to the justice of the great Judge of all men in the words of the psalm that he had been wont to say at holy Mass: *Judge me, O God, and defend my cause against the ungodly people, save me from the wicked and deceitful man.*

On the very next day, 17 February 1602-3, William Richardson suffered at Tyburn. An immense crowd had gathered round the doors of Newgate, and among them were the martyr's spiritual sons. They had determined to accompany him from the prison to his calvary. The way was long, and the road as bad as it could be. The martyr, as he lay stretched out upon the hurdle, was constantly bespattered by the slush, but as constantly his face was wiped by one or other of his children who pressed around his triumphal car. Again and again did the guards try to hinder them from performing this pious duty, but they were so numerous and so fervent that they could not be driven away either by threats or blows. And when the procession reached Tyburn, and the priest's bonds were loosed, and he was helped up to his feet, it was incredible how many crowded round him to kiss his hand and beg some little remembrance of him to keep for their own solace and the martyr's honour. The officials in charge began to rage like rabid dogs, beating some and frightening others by atrocious threats and curses, but all to little purpose notwithstanding. For as soon as some were removed others took their place, and there was no end to it till they made the martyr mount the ladder.

When he reached the top he began to make a speech to the people, but was forbidden with great violence by his executioners, whereupon he betook himself to prayer. He prayed God for the Catholic Church and that He would succour the afflicted Catholics of England; he prayed too for the queen and the country, that they might yet change for the better, and so being turned off the ladder he entered that way by which so many martyrs had previously passed to gain their crown.

Such was the death of the last of Elizabeth's many victims: the last, but surely not the least worthy.

Only five weeks later the queen herself "was called to the bar, to

take her trial before the great Judge."

The death-bed of Elizabeth has been described so often that it is superfluous here to dwell upon its miserable and melancholy details. Those who once have gazed on Paul De la Roche's picture of that death-scene will not easily forget the impression of hopeless despair and unavailing remorse which it too faithfully portrays. What a contrast between the death of this great queen, so glorious in history, so honoured and so flattered on earth, and that which we have just been describing - the death of the humble priest William Richardson! Who would not rather choose that sharp brief agony at Tyburn than a death-bed like that of the daughter of Henry VIII?

Let us briefly describe it according to our manuscript.

"Eight or nine days before her death she fell into a stupor and lay back among her cushions staring as if she saw some terrible vision that affrighted her. She turned her face to the wall and absolutely refused to listen to the entreaties of her attendants that she would take some food, or allow them to remove her to her bed. And when the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London came to give her some spiritual consolation, she drove them away with contempt, saying: 'Go, and bad luck be with you! I know too well of what sort you are, for you have brought on me all these miseries which I now suffer, and what comfort, forsooth, can you give to me?' And so she breathed her last, a prey to the most hopeless melancholy, and not without other even sadder signs of her spiritual condition."

For two days and three nights before her death she had sat huddled up on a stool, partly dressed and propped up by pillows, and no one could persuade her to move. She refused all food and sat in a gloomy silence, her wild eyes searching the shadowy recesses of the room, as though she feared to see some horrible phantom start up before her. Lord Howard once persuaded her to take some broth; but when he urged her to return to bed, she replied that if he himself had seen what she had beheld as she lay there, he never would have made such a request.

Did she indeed behold, like Richard III on his last night on earth, the long procession of her murdered victims sweeping past her and

summoning her to judgement? Many indeed were they, from the fair Scottish queen, her kinswoman and guest, to those unnumbered thousands whose bones hung bleaching in every village from Darlington to Durham. Did Philip, earl of Arundel; Thomas, earl of Northumberland; Feckenham, abbot of Westminster, rise up out of the darkness to threaten her with God's vengeance now so quickly drawing on? Or again, did that long line of Catholic bishops deposed and imprisoned come before her, and the widowed sees filled with intruders by her unhallowed hands?

Who indeed could exhaust the catalogue of her victims? who measure the oceans of innocent blood which she had poured out like water? There were priests like Edmund Campion; pious and faithful laymen like Swithin Wells; tender women too, like Margaret Clitherow, the "pearl of York," crushed to death by her most impious laws. But rather let us think that the prayers of those saintly and most blessed victims went up unceasingly for the miserable old woman who had sent them to their reward, and let us hope that those multiplied intercessions may have availed to win her the supreme grace of contrition in those last sad hours of gloom and silence.

About This EBook

The text of this ebook was taken from the book *In the Brave Days of Old: Historical Sketches of the Elizabethan Persecution*, by Father Bede Camm, O.S.B. The edition used was published by B Herder of Saint Louis, Missouri in 1899.

The cover image is part of the exterior of the Tyburn Convent, Westminster, England. I have no information on the crucifix statuary. It was photographed by John Salmon on 9 February 2015, and the image swiped from [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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